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Phil Hunter.

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PHIL HUNTER.

THE BOY SLAYER;

OR,

THE SHAWNEE MAID'S SACRIFICE.

A STORY OF THE OLD MIAMI COUNTRY.

BY CAPT. CHAS. HOWARD,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING POCKET NOVELS:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 45. THE ELK-KING. | 64. THE ISLAND TRAPPER. |
| 50. THE WOLF QUEEN. | 65. WOLF-CAP. |
| 52. THE MAD CHIEF. | 69. THE YELLOW HUNTER. |
| 60. MERCILESS MAT. | 72. SILVER RIFLE. |
| 82. KENTON, THE RANGER. | |
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NEW YORK:

BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,

98 WILLIAM STREET.

THE BOY SLAYER;
OR,
THE SUMMER MAIDS' CHOICE.

A STORY OF THE OLD MIAMI COUNTRY.

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BY GAIL GILES HOWARD,
AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING NOVELS:

41 THE ISLAND TREASURE	42 THE ELK-KING
43 THE WOLF-CUB	44 THE WOLF-GIRL
45 THE YELLOW HEART	46 THE MAD GARDEN
47 THE LITTLE LARK	48 THE LITTLE LARK
49 THE LITTLE LARK	50 THE LITTLE LARK

NEW YORK:
READER AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS.
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PHIL HUNTER,

THE BOY SCOURGE.

CHAPTER I.

STARLIGHT.

A LONG line of dark forms flitting through an October forest.

They approach the west bank of the Great Miami river, and halt upon the spot now occupied by the town of Troy, in Ohio. There the line becomes a circle, and two young braves step to the center, where they build a fire which sheds a ruddy glare around upon the gigantic sycamores and stately oaks.

Such was the prelude to the thrilling scenes that transpired in the Ohio forest in the month of October, 1782, and for the narrative of the dark and bloody events that followed it, my humble pen has been lifted from the rack.

It was near twelve o'clock on the October night when the savages executed the halt referred to above, and built their fire.

Without a single exception, the members of the band were young men, for not a gray hair was visible beneath the gaudy headdresses; and not a crow's-foot had made its mark upon a single forehead. They were plumed and painted for the war-path, and their eyes flashed with anticipated vengeance upon a single form.

Between two red Hercules' stood the center of attraction—a beautiful girl, who possessed a faultless form, a face as pale as the river-lily's leaf; light-blue eyes, and an ocean of golden hair. She wore the coronet of her sixteenth year, and her dress and manner told that she had long been the inmate of the Shawnee's lodge. Her beautifully chiseled arms, bare from the wrist to the elbow, were pinioned to her side, and

proclaimed her the prisoner of the hot-headed braves who surrounded her.

With undaunted gaze her eyes swept the living cordon around which silence reigned, until the fire-builders returned to their places.

Then a tall, heavily-plumed and not unhandsome Indian stepped from his position, and broke the stillness.

"Bring forth the stricken brave!"

For a moment a painful silence succeeded the command, and the dropping of the sear and yellow leaves sounded sepulchral in that ghostly hour and place.

Then a murmur, like the hissing of vengeful words, ran from lip to lip, a gap appeared in the circle, and a brace of Shawnees advanced toward the fire, bearing between them the body of a handsome youth. But the seal of eternal silence was upon the eyes, the lips; and not a muscle moved to indicate the tarrying of the spirit in its tenement of scarlet clay.

Simultaneously with the appearance of the corpse, the girl was led forward, and when it was laid at her feet she involuntarily shrunk from contact with the icy skin.

Her movement was greeted with strange looks by the Indians, and when the pall-bearers returned to their places and restored the broken circle, the chief who had spoken stepped nearer the beautiful and foredoomed captive.

She eyed him calmly, standing unguarded beside the dead.

"*Now* will Starlight's tongue return to the trail of truth?" pointing to the corpse, but looking straight into the maiden's eyes. "Starlight is near that black river from whose furthest shore no Shawnee ever returns, and, before the Manitou's light (the moon) sinks behind the distant cloud-bank, her heart will be an empty wigwam. She slew Omatla with her silver rifle. Let her tell the truth now."

Having thus delivered himself, the Black Eagle folded his arms upon his tawny chest, and met, with an ill-concealed sneer, the undaunted gaze of the girl prisoner.

"Starlight has spoken before," she answered, in silver tones, which blended musically with the rippling of the Miami, almost at her very feet. "She did not slay Omatla, the Spotted Snake of his people. The hearts of the young braves are full

of fire, and when they caught Starlight in the woods they swore that she should die. Ah! they dare not take her to Chillicothe, for the snow-haired chiefs of her people are her friends, and they would listen to her words. Starlight speaks again what she has spoken before—she did not kill the Spotted Snake!"

"But we found her in the forest, bending over the chief, and when we reached her side he was still bleeding—his skin was as warm as the covering of Black Eagle's heart. Omatla loved Starlight, who has proved a viper to the bosoms that have warmed her ever since Attawattamie snatched her from the fire of her father's wigwam. He sought her to light the fires of his lodge; but she answered him with fiery words."

"True," answered the girl, quickly and calmly; "Starlight was gathering flowers in the great wood, when, all at once, she heard a death-groan. She sprung to her feet and ran forward. Near the top of a fallen tree, lay Omatla, his head upon a limb, and the evil spirit's seal upon his eyes. He tried to tell Starlight who sent the lead to his vitals, but he could not speak; he pointed to the brake, tried to rise, groaned again, and the Spotted Snake had ceased to crawl. How long Starlight knelt spell-bound by Omatla's side, she does not know. Black Eagle's touch aroused her. There! Starlight has spoken the truth; Great Spirit witness it for thy child's sake."

Her last sentence was spoken with eyes raised heavenward, and, struck with the look that illumined her face, Black Eagle involuntarily recoiled a pace. But the cries that pealed from the throats of the assembled braves, called him from the dictates of mercy and right.

"Starlight has flung a lie into the face of the Great Spirit!" they cried, till the autumn forest resounded with their deep tones. "She has slain Omatla, her lover, and she shall die!"

Then the living circle contracted, and, with her old calmness, the girl saw death approaching her.

The savages believed her guilty of the crime which they have flung upon her golden head. Omatla, the stricken chief, had loved her with all the passionate fire of his savage nature; but the fair-skinned girl shrunk from his offers of mar-

riage, and bade him seek a bride among the maidens whose skin was as dusky as his own. He rushed from her beaded lodge, declaring that his wooing had not reached its conclusion; that Starlight should yet build his fires and live his slave.

Of his death in the forest our heroine had spoken the truth. She found the chief—her mad lover—stricken by the bullet of a foe, and while she yet knelt over the lifeless Shawnee, Black Eagle and his young war-party surprised her.

They dragged her with them to the spot where the reader has seen them halt, and prepared to avenge their brother's death.

Starlight refused to answer the wild cries, and with uplifted knives and hatchets the savages crowded upon her.

The painted face of each was clothed in the incarnation of fury, and as Black Eagle threw himself before the van, he shouted:

"Tell the truth, girl! Say that your bullet slew Omatla, before our knives drink your blood."

"Starlight has spoken the truth!" was the determined reply. "Even when she stands on the brink of the dark river, she will not lie. Let the Shawnee strike!" and in a lower tone she murmured: "Minneola! Minneola! we have gathered the river lilies for the last time."

As she finished, she drew her form to its full height, and gazed with a faint smile upon the instrument of death that hovered over her head.

It was a thrilling scene, and all at once its wildness was increased.

Black Eagle was the first to reach the devoted girl, and, as his tomahawk shot aloft, the sharp report of a rifle struck the ears of all, and he staggered from his action with a wild shriek!

An instant later terror and confusion reigned on the banks of the Miami.

The Shawnees shrunk back aghast, leaving Starlight alone.

They gathered around Black Eagle, but life was extinct; the red spot between his snaky eyes proclaimed the pathway of the spirit.

All at once, while yet they knelt over their slain leader,

and with horror-stricken hearts gently touched the death-mark, the hidden rifle spoke again, and Otter Ears, the eldest of the party, dropped over the stiffening corpse.

The second shot roused the Indians from their lethargy of terror. With faces maddened by determination and vengeance, they sprung to their feet, and darted toward the spot from whence the death-blows had proceeded.

A rustling of dry leaves in the gloom told them that the foe was seeking safety in flight, and their rapid gait boded ill for him whoever he might be.

The doomed girl was not left alone on the bank, and over the trio of lifeless Shawnees. A tall savage guarded her, and when he glanced from the dead to her fair face, his fingers itched to drive the tomahawk to her brain. But he dared not strike, for she must die by the knives of his comrades, who were seeking the slayer of the red twain.

Several of the pursuing savages bore torches snatched from the fire, and the sharp eyes of one caught a glimpse of a panther's head as he swept beneath the boughs of a beech. But the Indian could not stop to battle with the king of the Ohio forest, and noting the tree, that he might seek its tenant upon his return, he hastened on after the unseen avenger.

But scarcely had the Indian passed beyond sight of the tree, when the panther-head rose from the limb, and a moment later a dark form dropped to the ground.

There, instead of standing on all fours, the panther-headed object stood erect, like a man, on its hind feet, while the fore claws clutched a long and slender-barreled rifle!

A moment it stood beside the tree, and then, with the agility of a youthful hunter, it darted toward the tableau vividly outlined against the ruddy blaze of the fire.

A few bounds brought the singular being very near the blaze, and in the shadow of a huge oak it paused and snatched a tomahawk from a girdle that encircled the brownish-skinned waist. The eyes that nestled far beneath the yellow hair were fastened upon Starlight's guard, who faced the unseen foe; and something like a curse grated from the panther mouth as one of the arms shot back and hurled the weapon on its mission of death.

Truly that mission was one of death, for the glittering iron struck the Shawnee full in the forehead, and he dropped at Starlight's feet like a stricken statue.

With a cry of horror Starlight recoiled from the death scene, and as she turned toward the forest, she beheld the demon springing toward her through the light of the fire.

Then a shout of real terror parted her lips; but she could not fly. Some unseen thongs seemed to bind her to the spot, and she gazed upon the demon with feelings inexpressible.

While she looked with wildly-distended eyes, the panther oger halted before her, and the knife that glistened in the white hand which protruded from the yellow skin, severed the cords that bound her arms to her side. Then the same hand flew to its owner's throat, and a moment later the head flew backward as if impelled by magic.

"Kai Ja Manitou!" shrieked Starlight, shrinking from her strange preserver, and several feet away she gazed upon the handsome face that rested upon the shoulders lately surmounted by the horrible head of the panther!

That fair-skinned face proclaimed its owner a youth in years, and his form a boy in stature.

Starlight gazed upon him lost in bewilderment, until he suddenly darted forward and grasped her arm.

"Come, girl, come!" he cried. "The Shawnee dogs have lost the scent, and they return for your heart-blood. But we will baffle them. This is my first blow; but not the last. Hark! to the river!"

With the last word he threw the panther-head back into its place, and, clutching Starlight's wrist, darted with her to the Miami, which slept beneath the stars at the foot of the steep bank, near the fire.

And as they plunged into the stream, a score of maddened Shawnees reached the fire, and raised a pandemonium of yells when they gazed upon the tomahawked guard in whose brain the deadly weapon still remained.

They drew it forth, and, seeming to recognize its owner, in the manufacture of the instrument, they darted toward the river.

But the waters slept on, and afar in the wood, beyond the stream, the red demon thought they heard the tread of flying feet.

"Starlight and her white friend shall die!" cried a young brave, the acknowledged leader of the party. "The old chiefs headed by Atiwattunie, her red father, would save her, but the young ones will have her heart's blood. We will hunt night and day; we will rest on the trail if we rest at all. The forms of Om tha, Otter Ears and Black Eagle shall never leave our hearts, until we drink the blood of Starlight, and her white hound."

One by one the savages took the oath of vengeance, and from that hour the most terrible vendetta that ever cursed the forests of the New World, dated its red existence.

And that self-same night, while the Shawnees threw themselves upon the trail of the youthful twain, another vow was *renewed*, and in the following pages, big with events, the reader will witness the battles of the avengers.

"Blood for blood!" was the cry that now rose heavenward from the banks of the Miami.

It came from lips bordered by a white skin, as well as from lips bordered by a red one!

CHAPTER II.

INTO THE WOLF'S MOUTH.

THE Great Miami at the point where Starlight and her preserver left the shore, was quite fordable, but the youth held her above the water while he waded to the opposite bank, lined then, as now, with ashen-barked sycamores. Not a word parted the lips of the twain during the crossing; the cries of the savages around their dead comrades sounded in their ears like the tramp of doom, and the hour was made sepulchral by the broad yellow leaves which dropped with a dead noise upon the water about them.

The left bank of the stream was reached in a few moments, and from beneath a great tree, lying lengthwise in the water, the panther-boy drew a canoe, into which he lifted his companion.

Then, before entering himself, he listened to his red enemies, suddenly sprung into the boat and seized the oars.

The prow of the light craft was turned up the stream, and a minute later they were pushing against the sluggish current, without suspicious noise.

The wind was in their favor, and the light plash of the flexible paddle was wafted before.

For many minutes after the embarkation, the voyagers did not speak. In the dim starlight the youth gazed into his companion's face, and when he saw her eyes fastened upon his mask, he allowed it to drop from his head, and his rounded face, partially concealed by several long, auburn locks, burst upon her vision with a suddenness that startled her.

"You have never seen me before," he said, in a loud tone, and, as he spoke, his lips were wreathed with a faint smile—so faint as to escape Starlight's eyes.

"Until this night I have never gazed upon your face," she answered. "Why are you alone in these bloody woods? and why do you wear such a garb?"

"It is a long story, girl, but I will tell it in a few brief sentences," and he moved nearer her as he slackened the speed of the boat.

"Three months since I was happy in a cabin on the Licking river in Kentucky, that dark and bloody hunting-ground of the Ohio red-men. My father, Thomas Hunter, did not fear the Indians, and against the entreaties of friends to remove his family nearer a fort, he continued to clear the forest. Poor father! he paid dearly for his stubbornness. One night the storm burst over our heads. We were roused from dreamful slumber by the Shawnee yell, and in the work of death that followed, I managed to escape. From my concealment I saw mother and sister—my beautiful little sister with hair so like your own, girl—brutally brained, while pleading for mercy to friends who knew none. Father was tied to a tree, and tortured to death. I shut my eyes from the dreadful sight. I could not look upon it, and when the red hellions left, after they had reduced our cabin to a heap of glowing embers, I approached the dismal spot, and buried the dear ones side by side. Oh, girl!" and he clenched his hands and gritted his small white teeth till they fairly cracked,

"if you could have heard the vow of vengeance that followed the burial! Your heart would have froze with horror, and arrows of ice would have shot through your veins. I dare to say that the angel shuddered when he recorded that oath—the oath of the last of the Hunters, for I, Phil Hunter, am the last of my race."

He paused, and for a long distance the canoe proceeded, unaccompanied by the sound of human voice.

The eyes of the avenger rested upon the starlit waves of the Miami, and the girl who closely regarded him, saw more than one pearl-drop fall into the water.

At last he raised his head, and she spoke:

"Then you sought these woods to slay the red-man?" she said, half interrogatively.

"Yes. For two months and past I have lived among the dangers that surround the Shawnees' lodges, yet, until the day just gone I struck no blow of vengeance. 'Twas I, girl, who slew Omatla. I have been exploring the woods and streams hereabouts, making myself familiar with their coverts, before becoming the red-man's scourge. I am ready now. The time is near when the Indian shall dread the panther-fiend, as he dreads the Evil Spirit. I donned this garb," and he glanced at his disguise, "that I might ever remember the relentless nature of the beast, which I have infused into my spirit. Starlight, this hand never spares the wearer of a red skin. Before you, I renew my oath, I—"

"White Panther beware!" suddenly cried the girl, interrupting him as she touched his arm. "Beware, I say. You might make an enemy to-night."

"I have made a score," he answered. "Did you not hear them a few moments since?"

"I did, but *I* may become your foe."

"You? Impossible, girl!"

"Listen, White Panther," and her tone was serious. "I am a Shawnee. My first recollections are of a Shawnee lodge, and my lullaby has been the traditions of the red-men, breathed by a pair of lips I love. He who snatched me from the flames of a happy home, in the country of the Illinois, sixteen summers ago, has been my father; his real wife the best of mothers. When you enter the Shawnee lodges, be

ware lest you strike them. And, should your hatchet drink their blood, I will hunt you, White Panther, to the brink of the dark stream."

For a long time Phil Hunter, the boy avenger, did not speak. While the wild look of the girl startled him, he could not but admire it, for it seemed to enhance her loveliness, and he forgot her threat in the depth of his adoration.

Gradually the countenance of the maiden softened to the old beauty, and no words followed her last sentence, until the boy fiend ran the canoe into the mouth of a creek, which poured a mass of murky water into the Miami.

"We leave the boat here, girl," he said, guiding the canoe to the bank of the tributary. "What I call a home is not far distant, and we will seek it at once. We can reach it before dawn, and there you can remain, until—"

"Until what, White Panther?"

"Until I can guide you in safety to Boonesborough, or Logan's Fort."

A strange smile played with the girl's lips, and she listened without speaking to the plans which the youth had formed during the short voyage.

The safety of Starlight lay uppermost in his mind; he knew that the red league would hunt her down if she remained north of the Ohio, and he had resolved to guide her to Boonesborough, where she could dwell in safety. This noble work accomplished, he would return to the forest of the Shawnees, and when he had fully avenged the butchery on the Licking, he would seek her—and—ah! he dared not anticipate the future; but he would live for it—live for the consummation of the love which had lately crept into his heart, and burrowed deeply there.

"White Panther," answered Starlight, when he had finished, and was looking into her eyes with an expression which his heart threw into his orbs—an expression which she fathomed with a woman's cunning, "my heart thanks you for the work of this night; but here our paths separate. Starlight returns to her people."

Philip Hunter was dumbfounded, and the hasty stride he took forward told that he could scarcely credit his senses.

Did the girl really intend to return to the Shawnees? to

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walk tamely into the clutches of the red eagles whose beaks thirsted for her blood?

He could not believe it, and yet she had announced her intention of doing so.

"Starlight, speak your last sentence again," he cried. "No, no, I did not hear aright."

"Starlight is going back to her own people."

Her words were couched in a determined tone.

"Girl, you are mad! When the wren escapes from the snake's dazzling eyes, does she fly to the mouth of his den again? Who would shield you from the young men?"

"Attawattamic, my father," she answered quickly. "He leads the Shawnees to the lairs of their foes; he has led them for many moons, and the snows of winter lie upon his head now. He is foremost in the council-house, and his words fall heavily upon the hearts of the Shawnees."

"He may be great, Starlight, but he can not save you from the knives of the young braves. They will seek your blood in the village, though Attawattamic interpose his battle-scarred breast. If you enter Chillicothe, girl, you are doomed, marked my words!"

The avenger's tone trembled with emotion, and the eyes of the fair girl dropped to the brown leaves, which her moccasined feet tossed hither and thither.

"The old chiefs will save Starlight from the mad dogs' teeth," she answered, confidently, yet firmly. "The White Panther can not woo Starlight from her red parents, nor from Minneola!"

"Minneola loves Starlight?"

Philip Hunter frowned. The white Shawnee had a love then, and in his heart, the White Panther cursed Minneola.

"Ha!" cried the girl suddenly, breaking harshly in upon the youth's meditation. "The light is coming down the Miami. Starlight must away. Even now Attawattamic may be sighing for his lodge lily. She and the White Panther may meet again, but he can not woo her from Minneola."

The last word was uttered as the girl bounded away, and she was many feet from the youth before he comprehended her departure.

"Curse Minneola!" he hissed. "'Tis he who pulls the

girl back to her people. But she shall not traverse the wood between this spot and Chillicothe, alone. The avengers might cross her path or she theirs. She shall have a guard, and I will guard her to the lodges of the devils who would drink my blood."

The lithe form of Starlight had disappeared over the summit of a knoll, as the youth started forward to join her.

But his gait was suddenly checked.

The form of a giant arrayed in buck-skin, leaped over the bush-fringed bank of the stream, and catching his arm, spun him around like a top.

"Halt right hyar, youngster!" cried the new-comer, in a hoarse tone, and his gray eyes gave emphasis to the command. "Yer the biggest fool I've see'd fur many a day, an' yer a little chicken, too. I never heard ov a feller walkin' inter the wolf's den, when ther hull family ov furies war wide erwake at the door. Ef ye war with me erwhile, I'd l'arn ye sense. Thet gal don't care a scrub fur ye, an' hyar ye want to foller her to ther devil. Never see'd me afore eh?" continued the Hercules, still clutching Philip's arm, and looking him far out of countenance. "Wal, I never see'd ye until er minute ergo, an' I've been in these parts off an' on fur fifteen year. My name's Bell—Doc Bell, an' ther red-skins up an' down ther Miami know me like er book. Now," and he released the youth, so suddenly, that he almost fell to the ground, "do ye want to foller thet wild thing? Do ye want yer scalp to hang over her bed, or, perhaps be her piller! Say! ye don't look crazy, but—but—say, boy."

"I'm going to guard that girl to her home," cried Phil Hunter, impulsively, and he shot a look of anger into the stern face of the giant fringed with iron gray hairs. "They—the red hellions—would kill that girl for a crime she never committed. In Chillicothe she says she is safe, but they may catch her in the woods. I will stand by her. God helping me, she shall not tread the dangerous trail alone."

"Then go!" cried the old hunter, sternly, pointing toward the knoll mentioned above. "You must want to die mighty bad. Snakes! they'll not only tear that panther hide

from ye, but they'll hack yer own white skin with heated knives. I wouldn't give a dead duck for yer life, I wouldn't, boy, 'pon my soul."

Philip Hunter did not hear the last words. He had thrown the beast head over his own, and was rushing toward the knoll.

"He's a dead chicken!" murmured Doc Bell, watching the flying youth. "Follerin' er gal is a durned purty way of avengin' one's parents. He's about as fit to become an avenger as a frog is. I wouldn't save ther loon ef I could."

For several minutes Doc Bell, the giant, stood in the gray light of dawn, without word or motion. The sternness of his face had softened, and the workings of his lips told he was repenting his harsh words to the boy.

"He's but a boy!" he murmured audibly, at last, "and—"

The crack of a rifle beyond the bushy knoll broke the hunter's sentence, and he bounded toward the spot.

He quickly reached the summit, a hundred yards beyond which he saw a half-naked Indian running swiftly with a yellow object swung over his shoulder.

"Ther boy! ther little fool!" cried the giant, and his rifle shot to his shoulder.

Then a jet of flame leaped from the bore; but the savage ran on with his burden.

"I knowed it would be so!" said the hunter, disappointedly, reloading his rifle. "I told 'im he war runnin' inter ther wolf's mouth; but he 'udn't b'lieve it. Thet boy might hev been— I can not think that he war Sarah's child. He looked like Sarah did when she war a gal, though. Blast that white Injun thing! I'm as mad as blazes now, an' I'm goin' to foller thet boy. Ef he's erlive I'll save 'im, an' ef he's dead I'll choke thet gal to death. She got me inter trouble once, curse her purty face!"

A moment later, Doc Bell—who may not be a stranger to the reader—had left the knoll.

CHAPTER III

THE EDGE OF THE CRATER.

"HI O-E-CHEE! hi-o-e-chee!"

The startling notes of triumph burst from the throat of a young Indian, who stood in the suburbs of a populous Shawnee town on the banks of the Miami, nine miles above the *locale* of the preceding chapter.

For an aborigine he was quite prepossessing, and the extensive adornment of his person, with gaudy feathers, armlets, rings through his ears, and strings of beads among his raven locks, proclaimed him that intolerable nuisance of every savage and civilized community—the dandy.

He was unarmed, we might say, for the light bow at his side, as gaudily accoutered as his body, was incapable of service, and his quiver was entirely devoid of shafts.

The object that called forth the shout above written was a beautiful girl, walking rapidly toward the Indian from the river.

Her face was plainly discernible, for the sun had left his orient couch, and was gilding the earth with his golden beams. She walked erect, her keen eyes fixed upon the scarlet dandy, who smiled curiously as she approached; and when she paused before him, with ludicrous gallantry he lifted her pale hand to his lips.

"The Shawnees' Starlight has returned to her people," he said. "The skies above Little Fox-Fire have been dark a long time; and now they show bright lights again, and he is happy. Attawattamie has often asked, 'Where is Starlight?' since yon fireball sunk behind the river, and even now he is in his lodge as sorrowful as the honey-robed bee. Where has Starlight been?"

"She has traversed the woods for the flowers," replied the girl, still panting from her rapid journey from the mouth of the little stream. "But she will hasten to the lodges and restore the honey to the hive."

She withdrew her hand, and started forward, when the Indian clutched her arm, while an expression of fear flitted across his face.

"No, no! Starlight must not go back to the village until the fire dies away."

She looked at him wonderingly.

"While the Shawnees slept and plucked the flowers and shot the deer among Manitou's vales, Manoah and Tall Elm returned from the war-path, and flung the icy form of Omatla upon the council-mat. Then they shouted and the Shawnees rushed to the spot. They shouted in Omatla's ears, and when he would not move they thrust their fingers into the red hole over his heart; but he groaned not. Manoah cried for Starlight, and when he told us where he found Omatla, the braves drew their hatchets and cried for Starlight, too. Old Attawattanie could not speak! He rushed to his lodge, and since that hour he has sat beneath his bear-skin, as silent as Omatla. Little Fox-Fire's heart is glad because Starlight slew Omatla, with the forked tongue. He loved her, but not as Fox-Fire does. Starlight, before this land turns from you, the Miami will be dry land—as the forest. It will defend you, and—"

With an unmistakable snarl, the pale girl pushed the lover aside, and took a quick stride toward the center of the village, where many dark forms were congregated.

"Girl," and Little Fox Fire's cheeks paled at the exhibition of the girl's daring, "the braves are gathering to drink your blood. Attawattanie and the Red Pale-face can not save you. Stay! fly with Little Fox Fire to the lodges of the Miamis. Starlight—"

He paused abruptly for the girl had torn herself from his grip, and was flying toward the lodge of her adopted father.

For a moment the Indian gazed after her with irresolution written upon every lineament, and then, he darted after her, determined to see the result of her strong-mindedness.

Starlight reached the great square in the center of which stood the council-house, before a sound greeted her from the lips of the gathering clan. Her unexpected arrival astonished the savages, for they deemed her far away with the white who had snatched her from death the previous night, and not an Indian stirred until a tall form darted from a wigwam

near by, and lifted the girl from the ground with a cry of joy.

That action aroused the savages—it drove forth the volcano that seethed and hissed in their hearts, and with yells which would have done credit to the lost angels, they sprung toward the twain.

With a loud shriek the white-haired Attawattamie threw himself before the white-faced girl, and his tomahawk leaped from his belt.

"Back!" he cried, and the foremost braves recoiled before his flashing eye, and commanding tone; but the yelling demons in the rear pushed them forward again. "Attawattamie has led the Shawnees for many moons; his hand has never struck one, but whoso touches his Starlight dies like a dog. If she slew Omatla she shall be punished; but until she has spoken in the council, not one of her yellow hairs shall be touched."

The aged sachem's words for a moment stilled the torrent of yells, but heralded by the vengeful cries of Omatla's mother and squaw, who tried to force their way to the fair girl, it burst forth afresh, and ten times more furious.

"Attawattamie has grown childish!" cried Manoah, who for months had aspired to the snowy chieftain's moccasins. "Starlight slew Omatla because he loved her. Soon she will send the bullet to the heart of every brave who smiles upon her beauty. The Shawnee has warmed the white snake into life, and now she stings them. Let the old War Wolf of his people return to his lodge, if he would not see the viper die."

"Never! over the War Wolf's carcass the Shawnees walk to Starlight's heart."

"And over my body, too!"

The last sentence burst from lips that had not spoken before, and while the final word still rung in the mad Indian's ears, the throng parted and a man leaped to Attawattamie's side.

The new face that confronted the blood-seekers was pale, and not unhandsome. A dark mustache clothed the upper lip, and partially hid the sensuality that rested upon it and its nether companion, while the dark eyes, full of bravery, flashed an undaunted look upon the Indians. A showy, red

uniform, with the insignia of a captain, upon the shoulders, covered the new-comer's body; a rich sword hung at his side, but it rested easily in the scabbard, while a silver-mounted pistol was clutched in each hand.

"Wait until the girl has been proven guilty of Omatha's death," he cried; "and I tell you that she shall not die without a trial;" and he added, away down in his heart, "By heaven! she shall not die then!"

"Who is the Red Pale-face that the Shawnees should respect him?" shouted Omatha's widow, pausing before the Briton, with drawn knife. "He came from a dog beyond the sea, and he has left his flag in the midnight to become the lord of yonder white she viper. When the famine came to the Shawnees' lodges, he slunk to the Muskingums, who reveled in plenty, and when the deers came back and drove the famine away, he came, too. Warriors, what is the dog that ye should halt before him? Let us drink his blood! Let us destroy the two vipers at a blow!"

The mad widow's words were bolts of electricity.

A dozen braves darted forward, and two fell backward with bullets in their brains.

Wilde Waltraven was no coward at times.

The death-shots staggered the other Indians, and when they recovered, the deserter's sword flashed in their faces. But it was only for a moment.

Led by Manoah, who received the bright blade upon his rifle-barrel, the demoniac band rushed forward, for the third time, and in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, the Briton and Attawattamie found themselves *hors du combat*.

But Starlight was not yet in the hands of the avengers of blood.

When the savages sprung upon the trio the last time, a shout burst from a crowd of females who watched the fracas from a spot near by, and the next instant a girl darted to Starlight's side, through a momentary opening in the avengers' ranks.

She threw herself before the pale girl, as Attawattamie touched the ground, and the savages paused when they saw her determined action.

"Courage, Starlight," whispered the beautiful red maiden

looking up into our heroine's face. "Minneola, your red sister, is here, and the savages, however mad they be, dare not walk over *me* to you. I am Segawab's child, and Starlight—Starlight—Minneola loves you."

The last words were spoken in the sweetest of tones, and Starlight threw her arms around the red girl and kissed her.

Before the devoted couple the angry Indians stood, mute and motionless. They exchanged looks that spoke volumes; but not one dared to resume the attack.

"See! the Shawnees dare not strike while Minneola stands by Starlight!" said the scarlet maiden, with a triumphant smile. "When she speaks they will slink away like dogs, for they know she would die for Starlight. Hark!"

As she spoke the last word, a commotion suddenly appeared among the savages, and many turned toward the council-house.

The cause for the commotion was soon apparent, and Starlight threw a fearful look into Minneola's face, as her lips parted to gasp:

"The wolf has caught the hunter."

The yells that followed her sentence drowned the question which the astonished red girl put, and the following moment she darted toward the structure, almost dragging Starlight after her.

"Why do the Shawnees shout when Ahmeek brings a dead panther to the village?" cried Minneola as she rushed along.

"He brings no panther, sister," said Starlight. "The beast's skin covers—see!"

A shriek of mingled surprise and horror pealed from Minneola's throat, and she paused in her tracks.

On the large mat in the center of the gigantic council-house stood a tall Indian, and above the heads of the yelling demons, who surged around him, he held the form of Philip Hunter.

Prior to Minneola's exclamation the savages believed that Ahmeek held a huge panther in his arms; but when he tore the mask from the youth's face, they rent the air with cries whose like had never before resounded through the village.

In a moment the old chiefs cleared a spot around Ahmeek and his captive, and the young avenger was placed on the ground.

He gazed calmly at the wall of revengeful faces around him, and for several minutes a deathly silence held court beneath the council roof.

The youth realized that he was doomed, and when the stillness was broken by cries for his blood he spoke:

"I am in the wolves' den, and I expect to be doomed," he said. "But my way to the lair of the beast has been marked with blood. I thank God for that! Three Shawnees have fallen by my hand, and give me a hatchet, a knife, or my rifle, and the pale boy will fight the whole Shawnee nation."

His speech was greeted with derisive yells, and the circle of gleaming hatchets and knives visibly but almost noiselessly contracted, as though moved by some unseen contrivance. The avenger looked at his captor, whose eyes were upon the old chiefs—seeking a command.

Suddenly a yell broke from the youth's lips, and Ahmeek's rifle was snatched from his hands. The Shawnee leaped forward to regain it; but Phil Hunter dealt him a blow with the butt, which sent him reeling, almost brainless, from the mat.

"Now I am ready to fight you, devils!" shouted the White Panther. "Take no mean advantage of the foe. Come at me in front, one—two—five—ten at a time, and if I don't people Manitou land with red demons, before I die, then my name isn't Phil Hunter!"

The Indians were as eager as the boy for the fray; they accepted the challenge, and were stepping forward, when six aged but strong chiefs threw themselves in advance and confronted them.

"Touch not the mad panther," said one. "He must die before the whole people. We will call in the braves who trail the woods for him, and then for the great fight he wants."

"Let me fight the devils now!" shouted the boy, flashing a look of eternal hatred upon the Indians. "I itch to spoil a dozen skulls. No, no, keep your hounds in the woods, and throw what you have here upon me. They've made me a demon, and I would make them corpses. Back, old white-heads; let your dogs come on, and see how many empty kennels there'll be to-night."

But the youth's words had not the desired effect, and when

he caught sight of the two girls beyond the circle, he permitted the old chiefs to bind his hands.

Then the circle was broken, and Philip Hunter was hurried toward the small but strongly built cabin prison, in the north portion of Chillicothe.

He passed very near Starlight and Minneola, who, hand in hand, had witnessed his defiance.

"He's as pretty as the lilies when the star-water is upon them," murmured the Indian girl, struck with the prisoner's dark eyes and handsome features. "Minneola could love him, though he kills her people. Oh, why did the Manitou throw him into Ahmeek's clutches? Until this hour Minneola's heart all belonged to Starlight."

"What, sister?"

The Indian girl turned abruptly.

"Minneola did not speak!"

"Ah, you spoke my name, girl," said Starlight, "but you were not thinking of me."

The Shawnee blushed, and cast her eyes abashed to the ground.

"Yes, yes," she stammered, much confused. "Minneola was thinking of Starlight," and a moment later she started forward impulsively, as the prison door closed on the doomed boy.

Then the girls saw runners dispatched after the red avengers, who still sought young Hunter in the gulch; and they knew that during the next day, at the farthest, every representative of the Shawnee village would be at his post.

The Indians lowered fierce glances upon Starlight, and their angry orbs said, as plainly as words: "This is your day; tomorrow will be ours!"

The devoted twain understood that silent sentence; and throwing her arm caressingly around the threatened girl, Minneola led her to her own lodge.

CHAPTER IV.

DOC BELL ON HIS MUSCLE.

"HYAR goes, hit or miss ; an' nine cases out o' ten I hit. Ef thet Injun hadn't run like a drunken chap, an' ther light had 'a' been stronger, I wouldn't 'a' been in these parts. And I'm crawlin' inter ther wolf's mouth, all fur a boy—a crack-brained chap, who may be nutain' to me, arter all. But because he looks like Sarah, I'm goin' to stick by 'im, an' when Doc Bell makes up his mind to do a thing, all ther red-skins in America couldn't turn him from it. Ther boy war grit ; he showed it when he stood in thet ring an' dared ther crimson devils to come at 'im ; an' when ther scouts come in they 'll hev a fire at his expense, if he be still among 'em. But ther gritty an' crazy little chap shan't die like er dog—not so long as Doc Bell's in the neighborhood !"

The giant speaker stood on a thickly-wooded knoll, just beyond the last cordon of Shawnee lodges, and the night that followed the scenes recorded in the last chapter had just closed around him.

After leaving the hill from whose summit he had fired at the captor of Phil Hunter, he threw himself upon the savage's trail ; but the wily red dog had covered it by water, and the giant forthwith described a bee-line for Upper Piqua.* He knew that the savage would bear his captive to the Shawnee town, and he reached the suburban hour prior to Ahmeek's entrance. From the knoll, he witnessed Starlight's escape and the White Panther's defiance ; and with an impatience which he could not conceal he awaited the arrival of night.

Philip Hunter stood on the threshold of doom ; but so long as Doc Bell could interpose an arm, he should not cross it into the unknown dark.

Before he left the hill, he saw the stars disappear, and the darkness that fell around him barely enabled him to see his

* The Shawnee village of Upper Piqua is called by some writers Chilli-cothe ; hence our use o. both names.

hand a foot from his face. Yet, while he blessed the night, in his rough backwoods language, he knew that the stars would soon peep forth again, and that the new fall moon would shower her light upon the red-man's home long before dawn.

"I kin walk right to thet cabin in the blackest night ever made," he murmured, as he left the hill. "I've been to the pepper Pickaway afore, an' it runs in my mind that the red head chucked me inter thet hut, an' didn't find me there in the mornin'; ha! ha! ha! Wasn't that a sell? An' Doc Bell's the chap what kin sell the oldest ov 'em."

Fearlessly he crossed the outer line of wigwams, and crept toward Phil Hunter's prison. About him the silence of slumber spread her black pinions, and in many lodges, where he momentarily paused, he heard the regular breathing of Morphens' woovers. From some lodges he would start, as if impelled by some sudden impulse, and would shake his head to the mutterings of his lips.

For near forty years the giant had trod the path of vengeance, from the great forests of New England to the lacient lakes and rivers of the North-west. The massacre of his parents, in Massachusetts, had drawn a vow from his heart—a vow which, for three decades, had been terribly kept, and it cost a mighty effort for the gray-haired avenger to leave the lodges without driving his keen knife to their tenants' hearts.

"I kin hardly hold my hand," he muttered, as he approached the prison hut, "an' when I git the boy out we'll make a red track to the woods. It'll be worse nor the time when the angel skimmed o'er Egypt an' wiped out the yellow greasers. If I warn't a *man*, thet hand 'ud run away with thet heart, fur it takes a man to hold this hand when I think of thet night of hell in Massachusetts. Somebody's a-helpin' me, else thet dogs 'ud come smellin' 'round, an' go off with a yelp."

He reached a spot very near the hut, with the utterance of the last word, and paused, with his entire body on the ground.

A noise—like the sound of voices—had attracted his attention, and with the hunter's ready caution he resolved to

fathom it. But it soon died away without giving the giant a clue to its identity, and he crawled forward again.

His movements were very slow. He had seen two stalwart guards thrown before the door of the strong hut, built under the eye of Willie Walraven, and they must be disposed of before he could lead the boy avenger to freedom. His approach to the hut showed him no dark forms, against its white sycamore walls, and he reached the door without having encountered a guard!

Doc Bell was puzzled at this discovery. He knew that the braves had not willingly deserted their post, leaving the boy alone, when he might have friends in the town; and the more the hunter thought over the matter the deeper grew the mystery.

"It's funny, it's thunderin' funny," he said, in a low whisper, rising against the darkened door and discovering that the head chief's wampum still remained in its position. "I don't understand it, but I'll find suthin' out now mighty quick, I tell ye."

He severed the wampum with his knife, when his hands might have loosed it without mutilation, and opened the door.

The silence of the grave and the blackness of darkness reigned beyond the threshold, and with drawn knife and loosed tomahawk, the daring hunter stepped forward.

"Boy!" he said, in low, cautious tones.

But no answer greeted him.

"It's me, boy—me, Doc Bell; hyar to save ye!"

The echoes of his words returned to his ears accompanied by no new voice.

The hunter muttered "fenny"—his word for 'strange'—and stooped.

"Maybe they've killed ther boy. If they hev—"

His sentence was broken by his hand coming in contact with a face as icy as the sudden chill that shot to his heart.

"Hyar he is, as dead as—no, by grammamy! it's an Injun!"

His hand had slipped from the pallid and sweaty face to the necklace of bear-claws, just beneath, and a moment

after it almost lost itself in a horrible gash in the right breast.

"Wal, wal, one Injun less," he ejaculated. "Ther boy hed outside help, but where's ther other guard?"

His interrogative was answered by his hand, which had glided from the cleft bosom to another face as cold as the first.

Then the giant searched the entire hut, and drew a breath of relief when he rose to his feet again.

"Ther boy hes left ther eagle's nest," he said, in audible tones, as he stepped to the opening; "but the question now is, whar is he an' who helped 'im git erway? Thet white gal didn't do it, fur she lured 'im inter ther wolf's den, an' it 'ud 'a' done her little black heart good to 've see'd 'im burn. But ther red-skins war uncommon mad at 'er about suthin' this mornin'. I wonder what ther fracas war! She's a devil, she is, an'—"

"Who's a devil?"

The words were hurled into the giant's teeth without warning, and, frightened by the startling abruptness of the question, he recoiled as if he had suddenly descried a brace of rattlesnakes in his path.

"Ge—mently!" he exclaimed, and his eyes fell upon a girlish figure, standing within the jurisdiction of his long arm. "I warn't thinkin' erbout—who are ye, anyhow? I don't b'lieve in spooks, I don't; but sometimes—say, what ar' ye, death, or—or—the devil?"

The hunter heard a low chuckle before his strange question was answered, and the slight form advanced with outstretched hand.

"I am Attawattamie's child," were the words that saluted Doc Bell's ears. "I stole—"

His great hand closed around the girl's arm, and severed the sentence.

"Ha! yer the little red minx what got me inter trouble on the lost creek once," exclaimed the hunter, and as he hissed forth the word in bitter triumph, his face almost touched the girl's fair skin. "Curse yer tiny black heart! I said then thet I'd pay ye back ef I ever cotched ye, an' by Heaven! I've got ye now. Ye lured thet party little boy inter

the wolf's mouth, and—what war ye prowlin' 'bout this but fur—say?" and he shook Starlight till her white teeth chattered.

"I came to save the White Panther," she said, calmly. "He saved me in the great woods, and I would pay him back; the boy is gone."

"Gone! why in course he's gone, an' ye knowed it afore ye got hyar, too. You an' yer red relations—that is the youngest an' maddest ov 'em, feared the boy 'ud git out afore day, or thet suthin' mought turn up in his favor, arter ther scouts come in; an' so ye've took 'im out, an'—"

"The big hunter lies!" cried the girl. "Starlight loves the White Panther."

"Girl, that won't do!" and a flash of vengeance lighted up the giant's dark eye. "Eagles do love sparrows, but fur a certain purpose. But," and the voice dropped to a whisper, "I don't see why they—she—should kill the guards."

The girl caught the words.

"Would the Shawnees slay their own braves?" she cried. "Crow-Eyes, and Running-Water were willing to give the White Panther up; but—the big hunter says they are dead. Let him believe Starlight: her tongue is never forked. Would she slay the boy and stay among the lodges, when the Shawnees seek her own heart? She truly came to free the imprisoned bird."

Her words silenced the hunter; he fathomed and discovered something tangible in them; but they did not abate his hatred for the beautiful girl. It was almost clear to him now that she was ignorant of Phil Hunter's escape; the mystery of which grew deeper as he reflected. He knew that no Indian would befriend the boy; the only white man in the village—Wille Walraven—could not, for he had been a close prisoner since morning, yet young Hunter undoubtedly had outside assistance.

Starlight watched the hunter in silence; then his reverie was broken by a footstep. Scarce twenty feet from them three black figures rose from the foot of a wigwam, and together sprung forward in the starlight which again clothed the town in its weird and bewitching beauty.

Doc Bell uttered an ejaculation of surprise, and jerked the

girl from the ground, as he leaped aside and ran with the speed for which he was famous, toward the river.

"Don't try to git away, little minx!" said the hunter, managing to talk with the blade of his scalping-knife between his teeth. "Maybe I won't hurt ye after all, though I hate ye like I do the devil. War I to drop you, the lounds behind 'ud eat ye up, so hold fast to my old neck. Doc Bell hez funny spells sometimes, an' this ar' one of em."

His left arm held the little girl to his broad breast, while his right trailed a cocked rifle at his side.

He reached the rippling Miami with a hundred yelling fiends at his heels, for the trios' whoop had roused the village, and, as he gained the opposite bank, his rifle caused one head to sink below the water.

A moment later a score of rifles cracked; but the bullets whistled harmlessly around the twain.

"Girl," he said, as he turned toward the forest, "will ye go with me or return to them?"

Starlight was silent for a moment, during which brief period of time she weighed many important questions, and then looked up into the bronzed face of the giant with a smile.

"Starlight will not go back to her people now," she said.

"That's a sensible child," responded the Hercules, lifting her from the ground. "But I half wish she'd went back," he continued under his breath. "I don't like her, I don't. She's a little red traitor, an' the idea of Old Doc Bell huntin' Injuns with a little gal 'ud make a frog laugh. But hyer goes, hit or miss, an' I've missed it to-night. I wonder whar the boy is?" and he addressed the girl. "Starlight, hed the chap a friend in the village?"

"Yes."

"Who war it?"

"Starlight."

The hunter smothered an oath.

"I didn't want sech an answer, I didn't," he said, angrily. "The eagle can't wear the dove's feathers an' hide his claws, he can't. I want the truth when I talk, an'— Ge-mently! Injuns!"

He dropped the girl, and his rifle sent a death-shot into the dark forms that seemed to rise from the earth about them. Then he clubbed the deadly weapon, while the savages—the oath-bound demons whom the hunters had encountered and were leading to the village to witness the torture of Paul Hunter—contracted their red ranks, with demoniac yell.

It was the most critical moment of the ranger's life.

CHAPTER V.

FIGHTING AND LOVE-MAKING.

"We're in a predicament now, gal!" said Bell, glancing at Starlight who had snatched a hatchet from his girdle, and was standing by his side with determined visage. "The chances are ag'in' us, but I b'lieve the Lord ain't. What! der ye want to gab of peace when thar can be no peace atween Doc Bell an' a red-skin?"

"The big wolf can not escape the red hunters now," said a deep voice, almost at the ranger's very elbow. "Yet, not a hair of him shall be harmed if he becomes the Shawnees' captive."

"You can't make me swallow a lie, you can't, no matter how well you grease it," replied the hunter; "an' I'll say right hyar that if yer want the big wolf, come and take 'im, thar's all."

For a moment the savages did not advance. Several put their tattooed heads together, and carried on a low conversation, during which they cast venomful glances at the girl. It was evident to Doc Bell that the young braves feared him, though he was far outnumbered. They knew that they confronted the demon of whose bloody revenge they had conversed in whispers over the bivouac fires, and he had implanted in their hearts a fear which bravery could not root out.

He and Starlight watched the talking braves closely, and more than once the hunter glanced upward at the moon,

which now illumined the bare forest with her mellow light. He could plainly see the expression that clothed the Indians' faces, and when the little council broke he turned to them with his deep and uncouth :

"Wal."

"The hunter's papposes have fallen by the red-man's tomahawk," said the spokesman of the red band, "and the Indian can feel with him. He loved them, and if he gives the red traitor to her people, the Shawnees will let him, for this time, go."

"When ye guessed Doc Bell fur a durned fool ye missed it like blazes!" cried the giant, following the last word with a rapidity that startled the red demons. "I ain't a brute, I ain't. Ef I war, I'd 'a' deserted this little gal in yer blasted town, up ther river, an' now, henceforward, forever an' always, I'm going to stick to her through thick an' thin. I don't like her a consarned bit, thet's as true as gospel. I b'lieves she's tricky, but when twenty red hounds like yerselves want to cut her to pieces, an' hev the impudence to ax me to give her up, may I be shot ef it isn't more nor decent humanity kin stand. Thet goes to ther heart, it does, an' when ye git ther gal ye walk over Doc Bell, as dead as a herrin'. Make way thar, ye red dogs—the wolf—the mad old devil, Doc Bell wants through your ranks, an'—cl'ar ther track!"

A wild yell followed the last command, and ere it had penetrated far in advance, the giant ranger sprung forward. He had calculated every thing before executing the daring action; he saw that the Indians secretly feared him, and that they would willingly release him for the girl. But Starlight, like a sweet tendril, was twining herself about the avenger's heart, and he would defend her to the death.

He caught her from the ground, as he nerved himself for a dash against the scarlet phalanx, and his rifle, clutched by the barrel, with his right hand, described terrible demi-circles before him.

The Indians shrieked and recoiled, but not before several of their number had staggered beneath blows from which they would never rise again, and in a minute, Bell found himself and *protege* beyond the circle.

But the end was not yet. In the moonlight he saw the Shawnees recover their equilibrium, and as he leaped behind an enormous ash, full twenty rifles sent their leaden contents after them.

"Missed, as usual, gal!" he cried, with proud exultation, as he showed himself to the savages and sent forth the peculiar whoop which, in times past, had sent icy arrows to their hearts, and started forward again.

"Cling to my neck, gal!" he said to the beautiful creature, whom his left arm pressed to his bosom; "an' mind ye, cling fast, too. I must hev a crack at the dogs on our track. I can't help it, I can't. Doc Bell will be Doc Bell in spite ov himself."

His arm slid from the girl, and throwing her white arms around his neck, she clung to him right bravely. Then he charged his long rifle as he rushed through the forest, wheeled with a suddenness that surprised the savages, and dropped one of the foremost with a deadly bullet.

"They won't chase us long, gal," he said, reloading again. "I can drop an Injun every two minutes. Snakes! how we're gainin' on 'em!"

His exclamation proved true, and a few minutes later, the Shawnees relinquished the pursuit.

"Now fur my hum," said Bell, pausing to recuperate his strength, on the bank of a tiny stream. "It isn't fur off, an' ye kin stay thar gal, an' keep house while I see what's become of ther boy. You'll keep house won't ye, gal?"

As he spoke, he brushed a stray lock of gold from Starlight's temples, and, for the first time, smiled upon her.

"Starlight will stay till she rests, and then she must return o her people. Old Attawattamie must not weep for his edge lily. Starlight loves the old man, as she loves her own heart."

"He's nuthin' but an old Injun," said Bell, with a sneer, "an' he'll lose his white sculp some o' these days."

The next instant the girl sprang to her feet, and faced the giant with clenched hands, and flashing eyes.

"Touch one of his snow hairs, White Hunter, and Starlight will not rest until she has driven her arrow to your heart! *She will kill her father's slayer!*"

A fierce determination lurked in every word she breathed and the old man could not but admire her bravery and devotion to his mortal foe.

"Yew look purtier then ever, when ye're mad," he said, with a light laugh; "an' I guess I'd better ax ev'ry Injun I meet ef his name is Attawattamie. I'd sooner hev a million Injuns hunt me than one mad-woman. I've been woman hunted afore, I hev, an' you'd make a good Colech, too. But we'll talk erbout yer goin' back to ther red-skins arter awhile. Come, we're rested now."

Then the twain rose from the tree upon which they had rested, and once more the dry leaves cracked beneath their feet.

More than once the hunter was compelled to laugh at Starlight's threat, which he was to see carried out in after days.

"Now, girl, break the silence which has bound your tongue, and answer the question which my heart has asked itself a thousand times, while you were leading me to this spot. That question? Why have you saved the life of the greatest enemy of your people? I may enter your lodge, one dark night, and bear hence the hair of those dear to you. Every red man who wears a scalp-lock is my direst enemy, and I have sworn to spare the life of none. But the question, girl—answer it, quick—I can not tarry here long."

The speaker, as the reader has divined ere this, was the Boy Scourge, Philip Hunter.

He stood in the starlight, and under the leafless boughs of a gnarled beech, about a mile from the western bank of the Miami. And while he stood there, holding two fankle's red hands in his pale ones, and gazing into the soft eyes of their owner, Doc Bell was entering Upper Piqua, bent upon his release.

The Shawnee girl was the preserver of Phil Hunter's life; she had forestalled the big hunter in that noble work, and had guided the youth to the spot they now occupied. Beneath her knife the guards before the prison-hut had fallen. Luring one from the other, she had succeeded in dispatching both,

and the first intimation the youth had of freedom was the opening of the door, and the voice of his deliverer bidding him come forth.

"Minneola's lips are unsealed at last," said the girl, in a voice whose sweetness wove a charm around the avenger's heart. "Minneola, until the day just past, never looked upon eyes so beautiful as the White Panther's; and his face is like the willow-rose, after it has burst its bud. She could not dream of him at the stake, when the scouts came in, and so, her heart beating for his pretty spirit, she swore by the Manitou's fires that he should not die! She loves the White Panther, though he hates her people, and when the braves are upon his trail she will turn them aside. Now has Minneola's heart spoken to the little brave's?"

The scarlet hands trembled in the youth's grasp, and the girl's blue eyes sought the leaves that covered her beaded moccasins.

"I can not thank you with words," cried the avenger, looking gratefully into the maiden's face, in every lineament of which he could not but read the language of her heart. "I owe you a life, and, girl, I will never forget the debt."

"And you will love Minneola?" cried the beautiful Shawnee, quickly, and her face almost touched his in her eagerness to catch his reply.

"I would be cold-hearted did I not love the fair preserver of my life," replied Philip. "Yes, yes; I will love Minneola."

The girl's eyes flashed with delight.

"White Panther has a friend now who will never desert him."

"But Starlight, girl?" cried Philip, his thoughts reverting to the white girl in the Shawnee village. "Will your people not harm her?"

"Minneola will watch over her pale sister, and they dare not touch her while I am near. Segawah, my father, is on the war path, in the brakes of the Kentucky, and the braves at home must respect whom I love until he speaks. Fear not for Starlight, White Panther. Segawah may return this sleep, and he will say, 'Touch not my Minneola's pale sister.'"

"Again I thank thee girl," said the boy. "Guard well

that lovely being. She is much to me, and if you relinquish your trust, keep from my path."

The last sentence was accompanied by a flash of the speaker's dark eyes, and a shadow flitted across the girl's face.

"Does White Panther love Starlight?"

"He does."

For a moment the girl was silent.

"Does he love her better than he loves Minneola?"

"I love both."

"Two fires can not burn alike in the same heart," replied Minneola, quickly. "One of them must burn fiercer than the other."

The youth was nonplused. He might transform Minneola into a bitter enemy, and he thought of Starlight completely at her mercy. Truly, the youth loved by two maidens, found himself in a somewhat ridiculous predicament.

"Minneola saved my life," he said, at last. "Starlight run it into danger."

Minneola smiled, and clutching his arms, gazed lovingly, passionately, into his face.

"White Panther loves Minneola—the fire burns the fiercest for her. He can go now. The red girl's heart is at peace, and she will go back to Starlight whom she left sleeping in the lodge."

Philip Hunter threw a look near allied to pity upon the girl as she drew his hand to her lips, and again cautioning her to guard Starlight well, turned and rushed away. With his first step he threw the panther-mask over his face, and presented the singular spectacle of a beast running through the wood on two legs.

"Now for the vengeance my heart has long sought!" he cried, as he dashed along. "Now the Shawnees shall know that a demon has broken loose in their midst, and I shall take good care to keep out of their clutches. If I could believe that that girl was wholly safe, and I can only place her in the hands of the Great Ruler, trusting all to him. Her enemies are as plentiful as mine, and if Minneola knew that—that—" he suddenly checked himself, for far ahead he caught the glimmer of a fire.

"An Indian bivouac," he whispered, as he halted near the

smoldering fire, and saw four swarthy forms reposing in the faint light. "Fate befriends the blood-hunter. To-night I inaugurate the reign of terror; to night I stamp my death-seal upon the accursed Shawnees' breasts. Blood for blood! For each drop of the dear ones' gore, I've sworn to shed a handful."

That night the work of vengeance properly began—that night the boy, Phil Hunter, became a destroying phantom.

CHAPTER VI.

SHOT, BUT RESCUED.

"THE Big Hunter comes not. Starlight has listened for his step through two dark shadows, but she heard no step save that of the panther. Can he not find the pretty boy? Surely he can not hide his trail from the big man's eyes. Starlight will not lie here like an idle Shawnee. She has traversed the great wood after the Manitou's light had gone to sleep, and she will hunt for the White Panther herself, and alone!"

The beautiful speaker stood in the mild gloaming of a beautiful day, and while she spoke, her eye swept the forest that lay about her, and her attitude told that she was listening intently at the same time.

Before her a small but deep stream pushed its way through the trees, toward the Miami, and she swept its silvery surface with her keen eye before she vacated her position, and hurried down the bank.

She had proceeded but a short distance when she suddenly executed a halt, and stepped down a sloping bank toward the water.

"Yes, I will go," she murmured. "He may be in danger. A thousand fierce Indians hunt him, and he can not always escape them."

A moment later she suddenly disappeared among the shadows which the tall trees threw across the stream, but present

ly stood again above the creek, not far from the spot where she had uttered the words which inaugurate this chapter.

She now bore a rifle in her hands—a large weapon for such slender fingers to handle—and the hunter's accoutrements that hung at her side were out of place on such a slender form as hers. She paused as she stepped into a streak of moonlight, and surveyed herself in the yellow beams.

Then, hastily finishing the personal inspection, she turned her heel, and made rapid progress down the creek, half hidden in shadow, and half lit up by the rays of the midnight queen.

Doc Bell had reached one of his retreats in safety, with the fair young being whom he had carried from the Shawnee village, as witnessed in the foregoing chapters. Her beauty and bravery drew her near the rough hunter, and he forgot her past conduct in the intention to save her, if possible, from the vengeance of her adopted people.

But he was most concerned about Philip Hunter.

Aided by some one, the youth had effected his escape from upper Piqua; but the hunter could not identify the boy's friend. His sole desire now, was to hunt the young venger down, and compel him to stay with him—with him to carry out his terrible purpose of revenge—with him to fight when the Shawnees should bay their hunters.

He believed that he could soon discover the panther scourge, who would not quit the forest so long as his oath of vengeance remained unfulfilled, and the day that followed his arrival at the cave house, which the reader has just seen Starlight abandon, he left the white girl to carry out his purpose.

"I won't be gone more'n three days," he said, on the eve of departure. "I wouldn't be surprised ef I git back to-morrow night. The boy isn't fur off, and I'll strike his trail afore he gits into trouble. Now stay avar, gal. Don't git noisy about the chap, fur I'm goin' to bring him right hyar when I ketch 'im."

Then Starlight saw the backwoods giant depart, and she found herself alone in the shadows that crept over the water and filled the little cave.

For many hours she waited patiently for Doc Bell's re-

turn, but he came not, to her sad disappointment. Often, rather incautiously, she would steal into the forest alone, and listen and look among its ghos'ly recesses for his step and burly form.

When her supply of patience ran out, and, against the hunter's wishes, she deserted his cave, perhaps to meet a tragic doom in the death-net spread over the forest congenious to the Indian's home.

She followed the little stream for several hours, stepping as lightly as the fawn among the dry leaves, and looking around for the enemies who sought her young hot blood.

She was following in the wake of the big hunter, and once or twice she thought she desieried his trail.

At length she paused at the mouth of the tiniest of rivulets that debouched into the creek whose banks she had been traversing, and gazed upon two dark objects that lay at her very feet.

"Has he been so near me?" she murmured, stooping over one of the human shaped forms, after inspecting her whereabouts with a rapid but thoroughly satisfactory glance. "The White Panther has crossed the Big Hunter's trail, and by the little creek he has left that mark the Shawnees dread. Ah! Starlight could track him down now, and take his golden scalp to her people, and they would hunt Starlight no longer. Nay, they would make her their white queen! But she will not kill the boy while he spares her father, no, no; Starlight will not bear his scalp to her people; but she will hunt him down now, and when Big Hunter returns to his hole in the ground, we will be there to laugh at the long trail he made for naught."

For several moments the girl inspected the forms that lay before her.

The two Indians had not been dead long; blood still oozed from the mark of the Panther Scourge, and the limbs of one had not wholly assumed that frozen rigidity so peculiar to the corpse.

She almost saw the boy traversing the forest with the fresh scalps in his belt, for the tufted scalps of the Shawnees were missing, and their tomahawks were sticking in the trees above their cold beds.

For a moment, a flush of vengeance stole over the young girl's face. Never before had she stumbled over the boy avenger's bloody work. Before her lay the forms of two of her adopted people—people whom she had loved for years—in whose society, rough, but kind for all that, she had grown to the verge of womanhood, without knowing a sorrow.

The Phantom had broken the spell; and she was now a hunted girl—hunted by a thousand fierce Arabs of the western wilds.

With the fire of revenge in her heart, she suddenly sprung from the corpses, and turned her face toward the deepest creek.

"Why does Starlight think of the boy fiend?" she cried, impulsively. "He slays her people; he has put her tribe against her. Oh! if she had passed to the Manitou that night, when the braves stood around her on the bank of the Miami! Starlight owes the boy nothing, nothing!"

Then she walked to the water's edge, and her practiced eye told her that, after slaying the savages, the avenger had stepped into the stream.

She did not hesitate to follow his example.

The stream at that point was fordable, and, securing her weapon and ammunition from injury by the water, she stepped into the creek, just above the mouth of its tiny tributary.

Not a sound that told of the presence of enemies, broke the silence, to warn the girl of the danger into whose death freighted jaws she was hastening, and her eye swept her surroundings, as she waded toward the low shore among the shadows.

At length she reached the bank, and an ejaculation of joy escaped her lips, as she emerged from the water, her clothing dripping from the waist downward.

"Now Starlight will—"

The click, click, of a dozen rifles broke the semi-audible sentences, and, quickly bringing her own weapon to a "ready," she stepped back into the water.

Not a sign of a foe was visible on the bank; but the girl knew that her dread enemies were near. The ominous

noises had not deceived her trained ear; she knew that the savages had sought to drown the click with their hunting-frocks; but they had signally failed.

In the warm water she stood with her eye fixed upon the bank, that stretched before her like a dark abode of death, waiting for the Indians' advance, a splendid target for their unerring aim.

"The Shawnees can not draw Starlight from the water by quietude!" she cried at length, growing tired of the oppressive silence that followed the clicking of the Indians' rifles. "She has heard the noise of their gun-locks; they can deceive the girl no longer. She stands in the water ready to fight the braves. If she falls, she sinks beneath the deep little stream."

The last word was followed by a movement on the bank, and the next moment the voice of an Indian came to the girl's ear.

"The Shawnees cover the white girl with their rifles. She must come to shore or sink beneath the water, as she has said."

"Then Starlight must sink!" was the reply.

She retreated almost imperceptibly toward the bank which she had lately vacated, while the Indian spoke, and her enemies were not aware of her action until she had nearly touched the shore again.

"Starlight must stop now or die!" said the stern voice that floated over the creek. "Braves cover the heart that planned Omatla's fate. Let her sing her death song, if she will not let the Shawnees take her to the village."

The girl was not to be caught by such words, and, looking up at the full-orbed moon, a low song pealed from her lips. Its notes increased in sound, until they pierced the recesses of the gloomy wood that lay far away.

In the midst of the song the Indian's voice stopped the girl.

"Starlight sings for friends!" he said. "She must sing no more, or sing so the Great Spirit can hear her, not the White Panther, or the big hunter. The Great Spirit can hear the Shawnee breathe; he is not deaf!"

A strange smile flitted over the face of the doomed girl at

these words, and, again raising her eyes aloft, she resumed the death-song.

She saw a cloud approaching the moon, and she watched it intently, while her notes, somewhat softened now, crept above the tree-tops, and sought an opening into heaven between the stars.

Would that death-song never cease?

Ah ! it ceased suddenly— ; a note was broken in twain by its abrupt termination, for the black cloud had crept over the disk of the silver moon, and the singer had left the water !

The Indians saw her movements ; but she had reached the bank before they could act.

They saw her among the dark trees, and, almost simultaneously, half a score of rifles sent their leaden messengers singing through the air.

At the foot of a great oak, the young girl reeled with a cry, and dropped to the ground, while her weapon slid from her grasp and fell at the edge of the water !

The savages saw the result of their volley, and, quick as thought, were in the water, wading with ejaculations of triumph toward the victim, who lay motionless in the faint moonlight which now covered the ground again.

But this wild scene was broken by the unexpected arrival of an unlooked-for party.

The savages saw a dark figure spring to the spot where the girl was lying, and lift her from the ground.

They saw this movement with astonishment, and many paused in the stream, and looked to their rifles. But the figure disappeared as mysteriously as it had come upon the scene, and when the Indians reached the bank, a few drops of blood told them where the girl had fallen.

They stared into each other's faces in blank astonishment afraid to follow the trail which lay before them ; almost afraid to use their tongues.

The sudden rescue of the stricken one smacked of the supernatural ; but the boldest of the Indians tried to dissipate such thoughts.

" The White Panther has snatched the girl from her people !" said a brave. " He is everywhere ; but he will soon lie scalpless in the forest. The Shawnees have sworn to have

his blood—to scoop it up in the hollow of their hands and drink it. Adario will do this before he dies!”

The words had scarcely left the boaster’s lips, when the report of a rifle sounded across the stream, and Adario, without a groan, dropped dead in his tracks over the spot where Starlight had fallen!

A yell of rage burst from the Indians’ throats, as they turned toward the concealed foe.

“The Shawnees tread the trail of death!”

These words floated over the water to the ears of the savages, and they greeted them with shouts of defiance.

Instantly they darted into the stream, beneath whose troubled surface another of their number sunk in the agonies of death!

Then the enemy turned and fled—they heard his footsteps in the forest—and when they reached the bank they paused, and gathered beneath the boughs of an aged beech.

They had recognized the voice of the marksman, but now a question puzzled their own brains.

Phantom Phil was flying through the woods alone, after reducing the numbers of the red avengers; now who had snatched Starlight away, almost from the very talons of her vanquishers?

It was a mystery which the shrewdest member of the avenging band could not fathom, and leaving the Boy Scourge to pursue his way unmolested, they recrossed the stream and threw themselves upon the faint trail which Starlight’s rescuer had left for their inspection.

CHAPTER VII.

PHANTOM PHIL AT WORK.

“WAL, hyar I am ag’in, an’ no boy. I thought he couldn’t elude Doc Bell; but he has, an’ that’s all thar is ov it. Wonder what the gal will say? Guess she’ll call me an old wood-head, an’ say that she could hev found the boy herself. Wal,

p'r'aps she could, for the chap would keep away from me—I know he would; but her consarned eyes would bring him to her through a hull tribe ov Injuns. Pretty eyes hev killed more'n one young man—more'n one, I tell you."

The giant hunter, not fatigued, but somewhat out of spirits, entered the deftly-hidden cave, but soon reappeared with an angry scowl on his face.

It was the night following the scene narrated in the foregoing chapter.

"Blast my picters ef the gal ain't gone!" and then he stood for many moments in statue-like silence on the dun bank of the stream.

"Guess the boy hes got ahead ov old Doc," he said, at length, raising his head. "Guess he hes been hyar an' toted the gal off. It's a purty serious matter to steal a woman from Doc Bell. A feller tried it onc't in New Hampshire, and the frogs hev croaked over him for nigh onto twenty five year. But I guess I kin overlook the boy's doin's, though I don't see why he should run off from the best friend he's got in these parts. He will run off from good advice, and he'll rue it some day, mind I tell you."

The hunter leaned on his rifle, and gave himself up to reflection. He scarcely knew what to do under the circumstances. He had a mind to cease hunting for Phil Hunter, to leave him to work out his own doom alone; but then the resemblance which the youth bore to one whose memory was sacred to the giant, deterred him from this purpose, and drew him to other resolutions.

The shadows had culminated in night now, and the hunter stepped toward his cave, when a slight noise, like the tread of a panther, fell upon his ears.

He paused at the foot of the sloping bank, and cocked his long rifle with his usual rapidity.

But he did not raise the weapon, for before he could execute such action, a huge black object, like a great beast, leaped from the stunted trees overhead, and bore the daring hunter to the ground.

"Jehosaphat!" exclaimed the giant, as he felt the crushing weight strike his shoulders. "I warn't lookin' fur— What I double teamin' me, ar' ye? Blast yer picters! thar! take that!"

His knife had drawn a groan from the savage, who had leaped upon him; but the red-man's place was soon filled by another, and, as Doc Bell rose to his knees, struggling against the trio with the strength of an Ajax, a blow from a rifle—a blow delivered with all a Shawnee's might—stretched him upon the ground!

For a moment the Indians exchanged looks of fiendish satisfaction, and then sprung upon the unconscious hunter.

They jerked him from the ground and bore him to the woods above the creek, where they lashed him to a tree. Not only were his arms and nether limbs bound to the living stake, but a rope of deer-thongs encircled his neck, so that he could not move his head.

In this position the Hercules of the Miami recovered his senses, and found innumerable fagots piled around his legs.

The intention of his captors could not be mistaken.

He had eluded them in the villages so often, that they were not going to risk him beyond their confines again; but were about to sacrifice him, while they had the most decided advantage, and there were none near to parley for longer time, in which he might escape.

"Wal, I guess this might be called a ruther tight fix!" said the hunter to himself, as, with a grim smile, he surveyed his bonds, and looked at his captors. "They caught old Doc nappin' this time, an' took advantage ov it. But thar's one feller what won't witness this burnin' spree!" and he glanced at the dead Indian whom his comrades had brought up into the forest.

He ceased, and watched one of the Indians kindling a small fire with the aid of flints, and at last beheld the brave approach with a fresh torch.

"The pale-face can sing his death song now," said the Shawnee, applying the flambeau to the kindlings, at the foot of the tree.

"I guess that luxury has to be dispensed with on this occasion," responded the hunter. "I never larned to sing, though I war a fool far not goin' to singing-school in New Hampshire, when I had the chance. But the Bells never war singists nohow an' they ginerally die without a song. So go on with yer spree, Injuns. Ye've worked like dogs for

tha thing, an' may I be blasted ! ef ye don't deserve the fun Stand back thar, an' ye kin git a better view ov the scene !"

The Indians, wondering at the stoicism of the man whom they had under torture, stepped from the tree, and stared at him with folded arms.

Doc Bell wasn't afraid of death. He had faced the monster too often to dread him now. His form had become familiar to the hunter's gaze, and he looked upon the ordeal as one through which all men had to pass ; and, being somewhat of a fatalist, he felt that he stood upon life's boundary, which he could not pass.

The manner and time of his death had been decreed at his birth, and humanity could not abolish that omnipresent decree.

The fire soon began to scorch his leggings, and his nether limbs grew hot beneath the scarlet tongues that leaped at them with the fury of wolves.

Once or twice he looked at the immobile savages, and shot some taunting and defiant words into their faces, not to irritate them until they would drive the hatchet to his brain, but he loved to tell them of his vengeance, and he knew that they could not be induced to use the tomahawk on him.

Still he groaned not, as the fire made rapid headway, and warmed his breast almost beyond human endurance. He laughed when the three Indians approached, and made the fire burn fiercer ; and suddenly one, in a paroxysm of anger, threw his tomahawk aloft.

But his comrades caught the quivering arm, and whispered of slow tortures and untold suffering.

This had the effect of cooling the Shawnee's ire ; but it soon broke forth again.

"Squaw !" cried Bell, fastening his eyes upon the hot-headed brave. "Squaw ! I say, I killed your brother. A noble man was he, an' 'tis well that he did not live to see his squaw sister afraid to strike the big hunter who has reddened the creeks with Shawnee blood !"

Irritated beyond endurance now, the warrior tore himself from his comrades, and sprung toward the hunter again, with uplifted hatchet.

The other Shawnees darted after him for the purpose of

arresting the murderous weapon, and the hand of one had gripped the mad red arm, when its owner staggered from the fire, his wild shriek almost drowning the report of the death-dealing rifle.

Doc Bell looked with surprise upon the terror-stricken Indians.

He could not account for the fatal shot, which had thrown the two Shawnees into statues of indecision, but in the silence he heard the click of a rifle not far away.

The Indians caught the sound at the same moment, and darted to their weapons which leaned against a contiguous tree.

The rifles were jerked from their position; but one of the savages fell before he could prepare for action, and his comrade found himself face to face with what seemed a great panther, reared on its hind legs!

"The boy! the boy!" exclaimed Doc Bell, recognizing Phil Hunter, in an instant of time. "Jehosaphat! he cum jest when I needed him most. Wonder ef he'll git to doin' thet way?"

While the last sentence parted the big hunter's lips, the last Shawnee staggered from the Panther Scourge, and the next moment the boy turned to the tree.

He kicked the brands from the hunter's limbs, and severed his bonds; then turned to the dead Indians, and made his horrid mark upon their brows.

"I saw the fire from afar," he said, looking up at the giant, who had poured half a dozen questions into his ears in rapid succession; "and I ran hither as fast as possible. Now you are free, and I can resume my journey."

"Boy, ain't we goin' to stick together?" said Doc Bell, in amazement. "I've been lookin' fur you, but you sartainly wanted me, an' took the gal."

"What girl?"

"Starlight, she—"

"I haven't seen her since I escaped from the Shawnees at Upper Piqua."

"You haven't?"

"I haven't."

"Jehosaphat! Then whar the dickens is that gal? She must be in the woo's alone!"

"Where did you leave her?"

"In my cave, down thar. I left her thar while I hunted for you; but she's gone now."

Philip Hunter did not reply, but looked to his rifle, and turned away.

"Boy, whar you goin'?"

"After vengeance, and, perhaps, the girl."

"Then I'm with you."

"You are not, sir!" was the determined reply. "I can get along without Doc Bell."

The next moment Phantom Phil was bounding through the forest, while the hunter stood on the fatal ground, gazing after him in utter confusion.

"That boy beats the Jews!" he exclaimed. "But I can't desert him. No—no! I b'lieve he's Sarah's child, and I loved Sarah. He can't, he sha'n't git along 'thout me. I'm goin' to follow him ef I lose my skulp, an' he's sure to lose his'n!"

Then the hunter tossed the dead Indians into the creek, and hastened toward his little cave-home.

To say the least of Phantom Phil's conduct, he had acted curiously, in rejecting the giant's aid. The time was coming when he would need it, and Doc Bell's assistance was not to be despised.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RED-COATED LOVER.

THE man who snatched Starlight from the spot where she had fallen beneath the rifles of her enemies, ran at no insignificant gait through the forest with his insensible burden. He did not stop to ascertain whether the Shawnees had thrown themselves upon his trail, and were following rapidly; but ran on, looking ahead and on either side, with ear on the alert as well as eye. He could look behind when he heard the whoop of the red-man, or when his step fell upon his ear; he stopped intent now upon reaching a certain point, and that point was

gained as the morning, like a conqueror, chased the forces of night from the dangerous tarn.

That objective point was the river.

Then the features of Starlight's rescuer were plainly revealed; and when the girl opened her eyes, she found the British soldier bending over her, while he deftly plied the paddles of a small canoe.

"Starlight," he said, "your death-song reached friendly ears. I was alone in the woods when I heard it, and its bewitching notes guided me to you. I heard the volley that stretched you upon the bank. I saw the flash, and, exerting all my strength, I ran forward, and in time, thank God, rescued you from the red fiends. It wouldn't go well with me if they knew that *I* saved the hunted child of the Shawnees—eh, gul?" and a smile flitted over the handsome face of the speaker.

"No, no," the girl feebly answered. "Starlight will think often of the Scarlet Shawnee who saved her life; but where is he going to bear her? Surely not back to her people?"

"No, girl. When the soldier of England carries you back to the Indians, call him a mangy cur, a squaw—any thing but a *man*."

To this Starlight did not reply, and the Englishman did not speak further until he ran the canoe up a creek which debouched into the river several miles below where he had struck the latter.

"Starlight, we've got to stay hid to-day," he said, drawing the boat into a gray aperture of what appeared to be a tiny cave, which extended perhaps fifty feet into the bank. "That bullet has weakened you to no small degree, though I have stopped the blood. If the cloud hadn't crept over the moon when it did, there would have been a dead girl in the deep creek. As it is, the thing is serious enough; but you'll get over it bravely, and will be fixed for traveling to night."

"Where would the soldier send Starlight?"

"To see her father, Attawattamie. When I left the Shawnees, the old chief was sighing for Starlight, and I promised to bring her to him in the forest."

"Attawattamie will soon be with the Great Spirit."

"Yes," said the soldier, and as he averted his head a mo-

ment, a strange smile curled his lips. "Starlight will let the soldier lead her to him?"

"Yes."

The Briton was satisfied.

Already he had formed in his heart a diabolical plan, which he carried out to the letter in the future. He had determined to possess himself of the fair outlaw, and he would stoop to debasing deeds to accomplish his ends.

All day long he sat by the girl's side in that little cave, never once revealing aught of his plans; but now and then pouring forth a tale of passion, to which the girl could do naught but listen.

The night came at last—Starlight had longed for its coming—and silently the twain left the cave. The girl had fully recovered from the stunning effect of the Shawnee's bullet, and could think of nothing, but the meeting with her aged adopted father on the bank of the Miami, near the Shawnee village.

The boat was still a great way from Upper Piqua, when a noise on shore drove it to a shelter among the dark shadows that extended from the bank into the water.

A pallor overspread the Englishman's face, as he lay in the canoe, with ready rifle, trying to pierce the gloom across the stream, and Starlight gripped one of his pistols with the stern determination characteristic of the maiden.

"Little Bear heard nothing. His ears have told him a lie."

"The Shawnee's ears do not lie. They have heard the little birds hop from limb to limb high up in the trees. He heard a boat on the water. Hark!"

The last word was followed by a muttered oath from the Briton.

One of the lithe oars had fallen into the water.

The next moment dread silence followed, and then the boat which had been moored to the opposite bank, was pushed out into the stream, and almost directly toward the officer and his captive.

"Curse the luck!" grated the soldier, gripping Starlight's arm. "We must fly. If they catch us, woe to our skins. I'll lead you to your father some other time, girl."

They sprung from the canoe and darted into the woods. The man gripped Starlight's arm as he ran, and they made good progress over the moonlit ground.

"What! not pursued?" exclaimed the Briton, pausing on a hillock, and listening.

"The Shawnees come not," answered the young girl, looking up into his face with a smile. "We have been flying from shadows."

He laughed lightly.

"Starlight, child, where will we go now?" he asked, still standing on the rise. "I can fly to a spot where the Shawnees never come—never come, girl."

She met his gaze but did not speak.

"Yes, Starlight, there is one spot which the Indian's rifle can not reach."

"Where is that, soldier?"

"Beyond the great lakes."

"Under your king's flag?"

"Yes."

"How dare the soldier go back to the flag he has left like a dog?"

The soldier's cheeks flushed deeply, but he quickly replied:

"He dares any thing for Starlight! He left the red cross for her!"

"Starlight never told him to desert his king," she said, in bitter tones, which must have cut the soldier to the very marrow. "Starlight would love him if he would go back, and fight for his king again."

"Will Starlight not go with the soldier?"

"No; not while—"

She paused and cast her eyes upon the ground.

The Briton noticed her glance; he saw, too, the telltale blush that suffused her face, and a flash of anger darted athwart his countenance.

"Starlight is thinking of the White Panther," he said, half interrogatively.

"And of Attawattamie!" she answered, meekly.

During the moment of profound silence that followed, the soldier bit his nether lip till the blood trickled over the ashen chin.

"I see it all, girl," he cried, to a great extent smothering the passion that almost choked him. "You love that white boy. You need not deny it to me—but—but let it pass. When your tribe runs him to earth, or, when he slays old Attawattamie, you will seek another love."

Her eyes flashed when he spoke her father's name.

"If the White Panther slays *him*!" she cried, "Starlight will hunt him down, and give him to the wolves."

"Something dreadful tells me that the good old chief will fall beneath the boy's knife," said the Briton. "But I would have you see him before he dies."

"Starlight will see him soon. The soldier will lead her to him as he has promised to do. But—there! a call!"

The cry of the night hawk echoed throughout the wood.

"Starlight can watch herself, soldier," said the girl, calmly. "Go back to the red-men. Say not that you have seen the hunted girl; but tell Attawattamie that his child still lives. I will not hide from you, Red-coat. We will meet again."

As she turned, the soldier darted forward, lifted her from the ground, and imprinted a passionate kiss on her lips.

A moment later and they had separated.

"If I do it, I will eventually succeed," the Briton murmured as he dashed down the hillock. "She will hunt him down then—and then she will listen to me. Yes, I will do it!"

What he meant, and what he did, let the future chapters of our romance disclose.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW AVENGER.

A MORE beautiful night than the fourteen h one subsequent to the scenes recorded in the preceding chapter, could scarcely be imagined. The reign of the scar and yellow leaf had reached its meridian, and the skies overhead were mellow and light beyond description. Throughout the extent of the for

est the notes of a night-warbler made the crisp air musical, and one would cease to wonder concerning the birds' long sojourn in Ohio, when their companions had migrated to sunnier lands, when he beheld the loveliness of the dying year all about them.

Among the trees meandered a clear spring stream, which, celebrating its fountains, is now called Spring Creek. Singing its way to the broad Miami, it added to the rapture of the night, and the golden leaves that dropped upon its bosom owned a sad yet wondrous music, as they whirled hither and thither in the winds and on the tiny waves.

The beauty of the scene which I have attempted to describe was marred by the presence of a human being, who looked strangely in the light of the stars.

He leaned against a sycamore, whose white boughs overhung the stream, his arm folded across his breast, and his gaze riveted upon the silver surface of the water, in a half-vacant stare. To the casual observer he would appear unconcerned, but two unnatural protuberances beneath his scarlet coat, at the belt, proclaimed the presence of pistols—the heavy but deadly one-barreled weapons of revolutionary days. Instead of the regulation hat, which, in accordance with the remainder of his military garb, should have crowned his head, he wore a showy scarf fashioned after the manner of the Turkish fez, and from its peak a white fox-tail hung down his back. The face which has confronted the reader in the foregoing pages denoted its owner ill at ease, and every whirlwind would rouse him from his abstraction, and cause him to start from the tree, to which he would soon return again.

"I do wonder if Starlight will keep her appointment?" he murmured audibly, after fathoming a noise which had lifted his eyes from the water. "One week ago she promised to meet me here, and if she hasn't run across that white cur, she will be very likely to cling to her word. Girl, I haven't deserted my king to be balked in my fight for your hand. No, Wilde Walraven is not the man to be outwitted by a crazy boy, whose bloody deeds have struck terror to the hearts of the Indians of the Ohio. I have hunted Phantom Phil light and day. I have come upon his victims while they yet bled; but, like the phantom that he seems, he was gone

And that girl loves him—that girl whom I love—that girl for whose Cleopatra-like beauty I have disgraced my father's name, my own, and the coat I wear. But," and he smiled triumphantly, "there is one thing that will cause that girl to turn against him, and hunt him to the waves of the gulf of death. And to-night that thing has ceased to exist. Oh, the forest is full of vengeance-hunters!"

The last sound still lingered on the deserter's lips, when his eyes flashed with delight upon some object on the opposite bank, and he started forward with broad eagerness.

"The girl! the girl! by my British soul!" he exclaimed. "I knew she wouldn't lie! She will be as true to me when she is mine."

The figure across the creek stepped upon the body of a fallen beech that spanned the water, and the Briton encountered her midway among the dead branches.

She caught his womanish hand with a light cry of delight, and her first words when she looked up into his face were freighted with anxiety and love.

"Where is Starlight's father?—where is Attawattamie?"

"He waited for his child in the forest. She will find him among the yellow leaves," answered the captain, and his tone was full of dark significance, which the girl, in her innocence, did not notice.

He covered her with caresses as he led her from the tree into the wood; but she did not return them. Her thoughts were upon the aged Indian whose name she had just spoken, and her wandering gaze told the soldier that she was seeking his loved form.

Suddenly the Briton paused, and a paleness overspread his face.

"Where is Attawattamie?" asked the girl, in a disappointed tone. "The white Shawnee said he was in the forest, waiting for his Starlight."

"He is here," answered Wille Walraven, and a moment later he stooped over a heap of leaves which the winds had probably gathered in their sport.

Starlight watched him with a curiosity that told of heart fears.

He suddenly thrust his arm beneath the leaves, and drew

forth a dark body, as lifeless as a statue. The proportions were human, and as the Briton stepped toward the girl with his prize in his arms, she started back with a shriek, while her bloodless hands covered her wildly throbbing temples.

"My father! my father!" she cried, gazing upon Walraven's burden, with distended eyes. "Attawattamie has waited for Starlight in the wood; but oh, he does not embrace her as he was won't to do; Give him to me! he is mine! mine! mine!"

She shot forward like the Indian arrow, and jerked the corpse from the deserter's arms!

Then she lowered it to the ground, and knelt over it with all a woman's tenderness. The white man, with a devilish smile and crossed arms towered above her, and waited eagerly for her to rise and question him. His heart was raving to throw forth the words being coined within its various mints.

Starlight kissed the yet faintly warm lips of the stricken chief, and toyed with the long white locks with the fondness of a child, who hates to give a loving parent up to the worms of the grave. The man above her bided his time.

At length her eyes fell upon a circular gash over Attawattamie's heart, and then she darted to her feet with a cry of horror.

It was the vengeance seal of Phantom Phil, the dreaded midnight scourge of the Miami!

For a moment a deadly silence followed the cry, and then a groan escaped the beautiful girl's lips.

That groan told the soldier how she loved the boy demon, and he cursed him in the bitterness of his hate.

"Long ago, white Shawnee," she said, terribly calm, pausing before her red-coated lover, "Starlight warned the White Panther not to touch the head of her old father. But he has disregarded the warning, even as the young deer walks straight to the Indian's ambush, when its sire tells it of the laden arrow. He has stricken the best of his people, for Starlight sees his horrid mark which to night has turned her into an evil spirit. Now let the White Panther beware! for Starlight shall keep her word. She will hunt the boy dead, while it pains her heart. She will follow his trail, and

the mark he has left in yon true bosom shall grin as ghastly on his. Starlight lives for his blood. She will have it! Great Spirit, nerve her arm when it strikes, for her heart would turn the knife aside. Even now she goes! She left the White Panther to meet the young Red-coat, and he may sleep where she saw him last."

With the last word she threw a mingled look of love and anger upon the corpse lying at her feet, so rigid and ghastly in the weird light, and turned toward the stream.

But the Briton's arm detained her, ere she had proceeded five steps.

"Girl, stay a moment!" he cried. "May I not go with you to his heart?"

"No! Starlight goes alone, and some night she will throw at the white Shawnee's feet the White Panther's scalp. It is now for the pale one to carry Attawattamie back to Piqua, and lay him among the bones of his fathers. Away!"

She waved him toward the dead; but he did not move.

"When will Starlight meet me here again?"

"Five sleeps hence."

"And when she avenges her father's death will she dwell in the lodge of the white Shawnee?"

"'Tis no time for love now, pale Red coat," cried the girl, with a rebuking look. "When Starlight's work is done she will listen to the white Shawnee, for she has smiled upon him long."

Then, without another word, she darted away, and the Briton saw her cross the fallen tree and disappear in the wood beyond the creek.

"She is mine!" he cried with joy. "I knew the fitting of a certain spirit would cause her to hunt the boy. And she will not hunt in vain, for she knows his trails, his every hiding place, and five nights hence she will place his yellow scalp in my hands. Then to the land of the Miamis; then to the enjoyment of my plots, long delayed and often thwarted! Phantom Phil, you are a dead boy!"

Then the speaker raised the attenuated corpse in his arms and turned his face toward Upper Piqua.

He had spoken truly when he said that Starlight knew the

avenger's trails and secret places. Almost immediately after reaching Doc Bell's cave-abode, she deserted her rescuer, determined to hunt alone for the Boy Scourge. She trailed him to the Shawnee village, and saw him come forth with fresh scalps. She found his victims in the brake, by the stream, and deep in the recesses of the forest, each wearing the bloody circle over his heart. The fortnight that followed the boy's escape from Upper Piqua had proved a fatal period of time for the Shawnees. It was a fortnight of blood—two weeks of vengeance!

Phil Hunter came and departed like a ghost, and the Indians were made aware of his presence by the red marks he left behind. In vain they hunted him. In a moment of weariness, he would fall upon the little bands of avengers, and at daybreak their brethren would come upon a row of ghastly corpses. It was death for a red-man to sleep or close his eyes in the forest. Phantom Phil was everywhere, and everywhere the skies looked down upon his death-work.

Several times Starlight had encountered him, but their interviews were of short duration. He wanted to stay his hand until he could guide her to Boonesborough or Harrisburgh; but she would not listen. He could not wean her from her red parents and Minneola, and he would turn from thoughts of love to the work of vengeance.

The Shawnees hunted Starlight while they sought for Phil Hunter and Doc Bell, the giant demon. They believed her guilty of Omrah's death, and had outlawed her in open council. She met the Briton in the woods several days prior to the opening of the present chapter, and he had promised to lead Attawattmie to her by the stream. Both appointments were faithfully kept, as the reader has seen; and the result of the meeting was to hurl a demoness upon Phil Hunter's trail—a demoness who loved him, yet who would take his life—a demoness who knew where to find him!

While she was rushing from her red-coated lover, intent on the fulfillment of her wild vow, a dark form crept from beneath the natural bridge, across which it darted with the rapidity of a rocket.

"Great Spirit, help me!" cried a sweet voice, as the girl—for into the tender sex had the figure grown in the starlight

—left the tree, and threw herself upon Starlight's trail. "Minneola loves her sister, but she must not strike *him*! Oh, if Minneola could tell her what she saw in the wood to-night, she would pause—she would hunt another; but will she not pause now?"

Then a shrill but beautiful bird-call—the strange sisters' favorite signal—rose from Minneola's lips; but Starlight, deaf to every call but that of vengeance, bounded on.

The red girl called again, but with the same result, and then, gritting her teeth, as her knife flashed from her girdle, she darted ahead faster than ever.

It was a race for the life of one beloved—for the death of one hated!

CHAPTER X.

IN THE TOILS AND OUT AGAIN.

"No, I will not go forth to-night. The savage may rest secure until the stars fade away at the approach of dawn, for I need rest. Night after night have I driven my tomahawk to the brains of the scarlet demons, who held a carnival of massacre that night on the Licking. And have I spared a red life? Nay, not one! Of the twenty who bound themselves with an oath when I saved Starlight, thirteen have stepped into the unknown future; but their brethren hunt me still. I am truly the hunted hunter of these dark woods, unless that giant still lives. I have not seen him since that day when Ahmeek grazed my temple with a bullet; yet Starlight says that he looks for me—that he has taken back the harsh words he blurted forth that morning; but I do not see why he hasn't found me. We will meet again—no, I hope not, for I want to hunt hearts alone—alone!"

The youthful speaker stood alone upon the bank of a somewhat sluggish stream, and in the shade of an elm that grew near the water's edge.

He still wore the Panther mask, and the words sounded strangely, issuing from beneath the yellow hide. His manner

indicated that he had reached the goal of a long journey, for his leggings were draggled, and splashed with mud, and his breaths were short, like those of the hunted stag, when **it pauses for a moment's rest.**

He had been chased, and the fresh scalp that hung from his girdle, told the story of a blow for vengeance.

One hour prior to his murtherings beneath the tree, he came suddenly upon two savages skinning a peccary, which had fallen into their hands without a battle, and instantly one of the red-men sunk on the beach with a bullet in his brain. Then he sprang upon the other, and conquered him with the keen knife. He scalped the last stricken brave, when a loud yell saluted his ears, and he found a trio of Shawnees rushing forward, thinking the midnight scourge an easy prey. Instantly the youth turned, and fled at the top of the speed which upon more than one occasion had saved his life.

The Indians followed, with loud shouts of vengeance; but losing his rifle as he ran, and dodging behind tree after tree, with a dexterity that astonished his foes, he managed to perforate two foreheads with the deadly pellet, and the third red-skin, thinking discretion the noblest part of valor, turned, and **ran the other way.**

By doing this, the Shawnee lengthened out the little thread of his existence, for Phil Hunter did not pursue.

For many minutes after concluding his soliloquy, Phantom Pail stood by the stream—the present Lost Creek of Miami country—and then moved slowly down the bank.

"I wish this accursed creek would float a canoe," he said, in a vexatious tone of voice. "Then I wouldn't have to tramp along its banks all the time, in full view of every savage that skulks those woods. The spring creek is a better ditch than this, and if it wasn't for meeting that girl here to-night I wouldn't be in these parts. A fellow feels ticklish when two women love him, and he can't frown on one without making a demoness of the other. I wish I had never seen that Shawnee angel, I do upon my heart; but if it hadn't been for her—"

A quick footstep startled him, and pausing and drawing nearer the tree, with cocked weapon, he tried to pierce the gray woods to his left.

"That noise surely came from a foot," he whispered. "My ears never deceive. Ha!"

As his lips uttered the exclamation, his weapon shot to the shoulder, and he called out:

"Say, you Indian, or whoever you be, come out from behind that wild gooseberry, or I'll drive a bullet to your vitals. I see you plainly, and I don't stand much on ceremony, as your infernal tribe must know. Come out, I say!"

The determination of keeping his word, should the crouching figure disobey his commands, was written in the boy's flashing eyes, and a moment after his speech, a figure rose into full view, over the clump of wild gooseberries, and walked toward him.

"Ha! girl!" cried the young avenger, stepping forward with a bright smile. "Minneola—no—why, 'tis Starlight!"

Yes, Starlight, panting like the chased settler, stood before the boy, her long golden locks streaming over her shoulders, in wild abundance; her face flushed to a scarlet hue, and a knife partially hidden beneath the beaded fringes of her short sacque.

In the faint light the youth did not catch the flash of her dark eyes, nor did he note the ready knife. He was expecting to meet Minneola, but instead of the Indian girl, her white sister, with whom he had parted in the mellow evening lately flown, stood before him.

"Starlight, you have been chased!" he cried, clutching the girl's arm, while he listened to her hurried breathing, and saw her bosom rise and fall like the foam-flecked billows of the ocean. "Tell me, girl, what the matter is."

With a sudden jerk Starlight released her arm, and said, in a voice that proclaimed the mutterings of the volcano, which she was smothering in her breast:

"Does White Panther bear a rope?"

"I do; here, girl," and from beneath the panther-skin that covered his breast, he drew a coil of sinew-cord, strong enough to bind a Goliath.

She took it with much eagerness, and then, for the first time, the bewildered youth saw the knife which she returned to her girdle; and uncoiled the rope.

"Does White Panther love Starlight?" and the girl's face

shot forward with a faint smile, written upon the now pale skin.

"Have I not told you so a thousand times? and would I seek to guide you from these dark woods to safety if my heart did not beat for you?"

"Then if White Panther's heart beats for Starlight, he will obey her?"

"I will, girl; if you do not believe my words, try me."

The boy was now deep in the labyrinth of amazement, and could not divine the drift of the girl's words.

"Stand straight against yon little tree," she said, pointing to a sapling a few feet to her right.

The avenger stepped forward and obeyed.

Then, without a word, she sprung to his side, and passed the sinewy cord around his body.

"What under heavens do you mean to do with me, girl?" he cried, when he realized that Starlight was binding him securely to the tree. "The Shawnees might come upon us when I am bound, and then, girl—then we'd die!"

The maiden looked at her lover, but proceeded with the securing operation, without speaking.

"Starlight must be mad!" resumed the boy, discovering that the girl stubbornly refused to listen to one of his questions, and for the first time he believed his life in danger. Yet, why should Starlight seek his blood? He loved her, believed that she loved him, and, to the best of his knowledge, he had never harmed hers.

"Now, White Hunter," suddenly cried the girl, breaking rudely in upon his soliloquy; and with the knife again gripped in her right hand she towered before him, like the insulted queen of the Cenci. "Starlight will speak. Your hour has come; look upon the Manitou's fires above your head, for you see them for the last time. The words that Starlight dropped into your ears have been covered up by vengeance; and in the Shawnee town lies an old man with your red ring upon his breast. Yes, the White Panther struck Attawattamie, and he shall lie. Did not Starlight tell him so long ago?"

"Girl, I have obeyed your command," said Phil Hunter quickly, and with a calmness that drew Starlight nearer him

with a curious look. "I never made a ring on your father's breast; I would not strike your loved ones for my hopes of a higher life. • Starlight—"

"Forked tongues shal not lick Starlight's ears!" interrupted the infuriated girl. "Who makes the red rings but the White Panther? and whose knife but his spilled Attawatick's blood? Let his mouth be sealed, for Starlight will not listen. She loved the White Panther as the lily loves the little brook, or the humming bird the dewy flowers. But she has torn the brook and the flowers from her heart, and for the ring on the old man's bosom, the boy shall die."

When she paused, she leaped to the youth's feet, and he saw the knife glitter above his head.

There was vengeance in the white girl's eyes, and for the first time in his life the avenger gave himself up. Throughout the forest the death of silence reigned, and he would have given much at that hour for a rescuer, even though that rescuer wore the red skin of the Shawnee. From the knife his gaze dropped to the mad girl's eyes, and he whispered her name in the tone which had charmed her in days gone by.

But it had lost its charm now!

He saw that the fair white teeth gritted for the death-blow; he saw the arm shoot an inch higher, impelled upward by some terrible impulse, and the next moment he saw—the demoness hurled from him by a form which he recognized with a cry of joy!

It was Minneola!

Her right hand clutched a rifle, and it was her left which staggered the pale girl from her precipice of murder.

"Starlight has listened to lies!" she shrieked, releasing her white sister, and pausing before her quivering with rage. "The White Panther shall not die like a dog! He never—"

Minneola paused, for Starlight, suddenly recovering her self-possession, had leaped upon her with a quick, sharp yell, more beastly than human; and before the red girl could meet the attack, her rifle was snatched from her hand, and beneath the blow which the white girl delivered, she staggered against the bound boy, and dropped at his feet with a groan!

"Starlight, Starlight, murderers!" yelled Phil Hunter, tugging with all his strength at the cords which silently, suddenly resisted. "Girl, you have slain your sister. Until this hour I never dreamed that you were a fiend. What! are you not satisfied? must you have my blood yet?"

With night horror enthroned itself upon the youth's countenance, for, infuriated tenfold by the events of the last minute, the would-be avenger of an old man's blood was approaching with upraised knife.

"She crossed Starlight's path!" she cried, glancing at Minneola, who still lay motionless at the foot of the tree. "She would have saved the life of the forgetful dog who slew Attawattamie."

The name of the dead was hissed forth as the speaker halted from a bound directly before the doomed youth; but as the knife shot upward, a short oath cleft the crisp air, then the sound of footsteps startled the twain!

Starlight knew that rescuers were near, perhaps she caught a glimpse of the big figure that leaped a fallen tree scarce ten feet away, and she darted upon the boy with a sharp cry of rage.

Impelled by a whirlwind of passion, the glittering steel descended; but a huge arm arrested its progress.

"Hez the devil got inter ye, gal?" cried a rough voice; "or is he jest gittin' out—which? Blast yer pieter', I've a mind to slash ye ag'in' a tree!" and the Hercules threw the beauty above his head.

"Spare her, sir!" cried the boy, who recognized his lecturer in the person of the giant.

"Spare her, to kill ye some other time? I'll do it, blame I if I don't! But she's got to git away from hyar."

As the last word fell from Doc Bell's lips, he hurled Starlight from him with all his strength, and, narrowly missing several trees, she struck the earth fully a rod away.

Hunter uttered a sigh of pain.

"Oh, she isn't hurt, boy!" said Bell, as his knife severed the youth's bonds. "She lit on her feet, like a cat. An' I wouldn't care if she was purty well bruised. She's as tricky as the 'possum, boy. I saved her life, an' she deserted me shamefully. She won't forget you! Thar! listen!"

The twain listened, and heard threats of future vengeance from the depths of the forest.

"Women kin be devils as well as men," said the hunter. "I know that to be a fact. But, boy, I thank God that I've found ye ag'in, an' I cum jest in ther nick o' time, too. I heard loud words hyar, an' ther way I cum through ther wood war a caution. We'll go now; let's hurry, fur I want to ax ye a question. Ye won't foller that little devil enny more eh, boy? She'll follow you, mind I tell ye! What are ye lookin' inter the woods fur? Come, let's go."

Doc Bell caught the youth's arm, but Philip resisted.

"Hold, sir! Here's a girl who— My God, she's gone!"

The youth found himself staring at the spot where Minneola had lain, scarcely crediting the evidences of sight.

The girl was gone!

"She's a 'cute 'un," said the big hunter, with a smile. "She laid thar like dead, when I came, an' blarst my eyes ef I see'd 'er creep off. But let her go; she don't 'mount to any thing, nohow."

"She saved my life, sir."

"Sir? I'm no lord. Call me Doc—Doc Bell. No ceremony 'round this old chicken. Now thar'll be war atween them two gals, an' they'll eat each other up. An' when it's all over, you'll be a widderwer, won't ye, boy?"

The youth could not repress a smile, and while the hunter led him from the spot, he tried to pierce the future and gaze upon the hidden acts of his life-drama.

CHAPTER XI.

BAFFLED BY A PANTHER.

WHILE Phil Hunter stood bound to the sapling with Starlight's glittering knife ready to cleave his head, Wilde Walraven, the English deserter, strode into the Shawnee village with the corpse of Attawattamie in his arms.

When the savages returned to the village, from the pursuit

of Doc Bell, who had escaped with our pale-faced heroine, a few proposed to wreak their disappointed vengeance upon the Red coat, who, with Attawattamie, had lain bound in a wigwam since their defense of Starlight. The Englishman's pistols had dropped two braves, and the proposition of the mad young warriors rapidly gained adherents, until the man's life hung on a thread as delicate as the little spilers' spinning. A hot debate followed the proposal, and the young men were on the brink of success, when Segawah, the great sachem of the Shawnees, unexpectedly arrived on the scene.

His word was law among his red subjects, and at once the dispute ceased. He listened to the Englishman's crime; he heard the names of the slaughtered Indians, and then he spoke.

He told the Shawnees that the tribe was a gainer by the death of the two braves, who were Miami, adopted at their own request into the nation, and proved their characters to have been of the most repulsive kind. He honored the Briton for ridding the tribe of the red pilferers, and thanked the Miami that their blood did not stain a Shawnee's hands.

The savages dare not murmur against Segawah's decision, and a minute after its rendition Wilde Walraven walked from the wigwam a free man, and considerably elevated in the good graces of the tribe. Of course Attawattamie, too, was liberated, and before dawn the old man heard his white *protégée* outlawed by the nation which had once worshiped her, and a price—twenty buffalo-skins, three rifles, and various other articles—set upon her fair head.

The old man dearly loved Starlight, and it is no wonder, for he had watched her through childhood to womanhood, and when he returned from the chase, or from the war-trail, her coral lips were the first to meet his; her bright eyes the first to admire his trophies.

Her outlawry almost broke his old heart, and under the blow he sunk rapidly. All desires, save one, deserted him, and that sole desire was to see Starlight before he passed to the savage's reward.

Wilde Walraven hunted for the outlawed girl. He found her, and told her that upon a certain night he would lead Attawattamie to a certain spot. She should meet them there.

PHIL HUNTER,

That meeting the reader has witnessed—the old chief was found dead, with Phantom Phil's mark over his stilled heart!

The Briton's arrival in Upper Piqua with the corpse drew forth every mad passion that lurked in the Shawnees' hearts. They danced and yelled around the body, and demanded at once to be led to the avenger's trail. Wilde Walraven could not perform this office; the avenger, he said, had left no trail; and at that hour was undoubtedly far away.

All night the demoniacal orgies were kept up over the murdered chieftain, and not an eye in the entire village was closed in sleep. Just before daylight Minneola returned, and stood near the corpse with a faint smile. No one questioned her concerning her absence, for several days; for she was Segawah's daughter, and could go and come when she pleased. She had never been suspected for liberating the White Panther; and no one dreamed of her interviews with the depopulator of the tribe.

For many minutes she stood near the corpse, shaking her head doubtingly, and muttering a string of incoherent words, when she suddenly whirled and strode to a small lodge, whose skinny curtains were closely drawn, thus totally excluding the rays of the moon.

With bold hand she drew aside the curtains, and stepped into the tenantless interior. In the center of the wigwam a small fire burned to the pinnacle of its brightness, and revealed a sword with its gilt trappings, lying upon a couch.

"Ha! the white dog has deserted his kennel!" she cried, stooping and unsheathing the glittering blade. "But he will slink back soon. He used his teeth and tongue well to-night, and before the fireball throws his light upon the river of the Miamis, he must use his legs. Minneola has smiled upon him and he has said soft words to her; but she will never smile again upon the dark soul who woos with the knife."

While she uttered the last sentence, she stooped before the fire, and admired the devices on the true Damascus blade; but as the last word left her lips she sprung to her feet, with a light exclamation of surprise.

"Who talks of dark souls and knives?" were the words that startled the beautiful red rose, and the eyes of the speaker

—Will: Walraven—seemed to burn her cheeks, so near he stood to her, and so full were his orbs with fire.

One of his hands had half-drawn a pistol from his girdle. But the point of his sword which Minneola had thrust to his breast, prevented him from drawing the weapon.

He had encountered a girl who knew no fear—a maiden whose eyes told him that she would drive his own sword through his body, if he drew the pistol.

"Minneola talks of knives and dark souls!" hissed the girl, with flashing eyes; "and she talks of them before the darkest-souled dog in the Upper Piqua. Not long ago, Minneola stood by the Spring Creek, and while she stood there the Red coat and Attawattmie came before her eyes. She watched them as the panther watches the deer from the well-leaved limb, and all at once she saw—"

"Hush, girl! For the Manitou's sake, still that tongue of yours!" interrupted the Briton, his face suddenly assuming a deathly pallor. "For the love of God, tell me not what you saw by the fallen log. The Shawnees are abroad to night, and the ears of some may not be far away. What would you with me now?"

The girl did not reply, but laughed at the Englishman's terror.

He knew that he was in her power, and now he was willing to buy himself out.

He spoke again and stilled Minneola's exclamation.

"Girl, what will seal your lips?" he asked, the pallor clinging to his face, with the tenacity of death. "You have admired, yea loved, the sword given me by my king. Take it and seal your lips."

"For all the pretty swords in the great country beyond the big water, Minneola would not still her tongue," she answered, quickly, and the Briton started back as, with a smile, the red girl thrust the blade against his uniform. "Before the Red-coat could count the pictures on his sword, Minneola could have him torn to pieces by her people."

"Girl, I know it, but for heaven's sake! do not do it," he begged. "I am not ready to die."

"Some die before they are ready to hunt the deer in spirit-land. Was Attawattmie's bow ready when he stepped upon the long trail?"

"Don't talk that way, girl; the Shawnees' ears may rest against the lodge. Break this suspense. What are you going to do about it?"

"Red-coat must go with Minneola," she said, and even that mysterious sentence drew a breath of relief from the Briton.

"Then haste away; this torture, this uncertainty, seems a hell."

Before she left her position, Minneola made the Briton cast his knife and his pistols upon the couch, and one of the latter she picked up and thrust beneath her robe.

"Depart, Red-coat!"

She waved him to the door, and with gritted teeth, and wilfully-throbbing heart the white obeyed the command.

Through the village they hurried, passing many savages, who stared at them with wonderment, and resumed their curses upon the Boy Scourge. When they passed Attawattamie's corpse, lying alone in the council-house, a visible tremor shook the Briton's frame, and he quickened his steps, to the grim delight of the girl.

At length they reached the bank of the Miami, some distance above the village, when the darkness that precedes the dawn was leaving the earth to the sighing of a freezing wind.

"Now, Red-coat," said the girl, turning suddenly upon the young deserter, "you must swear by the Manitou."

"Swear to what, Minneola?"

"Swear that you will never enter a Shawnee lodge again."

The pistol shot from the girl's bosom, and the white heard the click of the lock.

"Must I leave the people I have loved so long?" cried Walraven, with feigned sadness. "Oh, girl, do not drive me forth among the wolves; do not add another outlaw to these dark woods!"

"The white-face must swear, or—or—step upon the never-ending trail!"

The pistol crept nearer his face.

"Minneola saw what he did in the forest to-night. His hand has caused Starlight to seek the heart-blood of the boy Minneola loves, and not long ago her knife was snatched from her hand by her red sister. She will hunt Minneola. The

Red-coat's black soul and red knife did all this. It has turned the lily into a thistle ; or the dove into a hawk. But swear, Red coat, swear !"

A terrible oath burst from the white Shawnee's throat.

He could see no avenue of escape, yet he hesitated taking the oath that would make him an outlaw, perhaps a hunted one, for he did not know what the red girl might do, when she returned to the village.

"Down ! swear !" she cried, impatiently.

Mechanically the white man obeyed, and as his knees touched the frosty leaves, a half-human shriek grated on his ears, and a huge body shot over his head !

The next instant, with a cry of horror, he was on his feet again, and scarce a rod distant, he saw the gigantic panther, which had leaped from the branch overhead.

He had escaped the dreadful teeth and claws by kneeling, and the brute was preparing for another spring.

Minneola was undecided how to act. If she slew the panther, the Briton, no longer fearful of the pistol, would turn the tables upon her, and at his hands she would receive no mercy.

Her period of mental argument lasted but a moment ; it was brought to a close by Wilde Walraven.

He darted upon the girl, with an oath. He snatched the weapon from her hand, and whirling her light form above his head, hurled her from the steep bank into the starlit Miami. She disappeared beneath the stream, but came to the surface a moment later.

"Curse you !" he yelled, and in the haste to finish his work, forgetting the yellow king of the woods, he fired at the head on the water.

It sunk with a groan, beneath the surface !

"I'm free at last !" he cried, exultantly, as he turned away ; but the next instant a piercing shriek shot from his throat and he staggered back beneath the huge body of the panther.

CHAPTER XII.

SAMPSON AMONG HIS PHILISTINES.

"Boy, I've been a-lookin' fur you nigh onter three weeks," said Doc Bell, as he hurried through the woods toward the Miami, after rescuing the young slayer from Starlight's vengeance; "an' you don't know what good it does my old heart to see you at my side. But hold on er minute, chap. Stand thar, with yer face to the moon, fur I want to look at it."

As the giant uttered the last sentence, he griped Hunter's arm and spun him around until the golden moon shone full on his face.

Then the stern expression softened, and for a minute the hunter scrutinized the boy's features with a faint smile upon his lips.

Philip stood the scrutiny, lost in the mazes of wonderment, and intense mystery.

"Yas, I knowed it," suddenly cried the old man, and his long arms drew the youth to his broad breast. "Yas, boy, I knowed you war Sarah's child, an' she war ther best sister I ever had."

"What do you mean, Doc?" cried Phantom Phil, trying to disengage himself from the bruin-like hug, while he stared enigmatically into the tear-wet face above him. "Tell me what you mean when you talk about Sarah. That was my mother's name."

For a moment the big hunter was silent; he held the boy at arm's length, and looked at him with a nervous twitching of the lips, which told of the emotion that surged in his heart.

"Yes, chap," he said, at length, his voice tremulous with emotion, which seldom swayed the unsparing avenger, "Sarah Bell war my sister, as well as your mother."

"Then—"

"I am yer uncle," finished the hunter. "Arter I let ye go arter that silly white gal, as you recollect, boy, I saw Sarah's face in yours, an' I've hunted you ever since to tell you that

I, old Doc Bell, war yer uncle, an' to be near you when danger came. Boy, nine weeks ago I reached ther Lickin' arter er long tramp. I tuk a notion thet I'd like to see Sarah an' ther babies, for I hadn't see'd 'em fur 'leven years, afore they moved from Virginny. Wal, boy—yer name's Phil arter yer father ain't it?—I got to ther river; I found a cleared patch o' ground, an' right in ther middle o' it lay some black logs. Then I saw suthin' else—three graves. Philip, thet riled me, an' I stood over them a-thinkin' an' a-cryin' fur two hours. I couldn't help it. I hedn't see'd yer mother fur 'leven years, an' to find her dead went right squar' to my heart. While I stood over them ar' graves, a posse of settlers cum along, an' they told me of ther butchery, but didn't know er word erbout you. Then I tuk sum big oaths, looked at the graves once more, an' broke fur the Ohio to lift the ha'r of ev'ry red-skin who helped to make me sisterless.

"Now," said the hunter, after a long pause, during which Philip Hunter had essayed to speak, but could not, "now, thank God! I've found you, an' we're goin' to stick together. We'll hunt ther red butchers together, an' upon th'er scarlet pates two blows shall fall instead o' one."

"Uncle, give me the hand I have not touched so long," cried the youth, the old fire of vengeance driving the soft expression from his eyes; and a minute later he found his little hand almost crushed in the horny palm that closed over it. "Yes, we will stick together, now; I will look to you for advice, and when I am hasty, correct me as you would your son."

"I'll do it," said the old hunter; "but don't get hasty, boy. I don't want to say a harsh word to you, fur Sarah's sake. You will overlook the rough way I have used you."

"Indeed I will, Doc—uncle," said the boy. "Oh, I am so glad that fortune guided you to me. But—hark! was that not a rifle?"

"It war er gun, by grammany!" exclaimed the big hunter, "an' it war on the Miami, too!"

The next moment the twain bounded forward again, and soon stood upon the eastern bank of the river, several miles below Upper Piqua.

About them all was silent, and not a living thing marred

the silver surface of the water. The tall sycamores threw giant shadows across the stream, and the couple listened and looked with all their might.

They had reached the bank a minute after the shot, and they knew that they occupied a spot not far remote from that occupied by the unseen marksman.

"It's funny, very funny," said Doc Bell, returning to the young slayer from a brief reconnoissance up-stream. "I must hev been a death-shot, er else—"

"Hist! Doc—look yonder!"

The youth had clutched the hunter's arm, and was pointing to a dark object slowly descending the Miami.

"The Indian in the boat fired the shot," the youth continued in a whisper; "but what did he shoot at?"

"Whar's an Injun, boy?" asked the giant, curiously, with his eyes fastened upon the canoe. "Ef ye kin see a red-skin in that boat I'll trade eyes with you, an' give my rifle to boot. But, chap, thar isn't any scarlet devil in thet canoe."

"Then it is empty."

"No, it isn't! Now it's goin' through the moonshine. Look at it sharp, now. Quick! did yer see?"

"Yes, there's a woman in that boat, and she lies as quiet as a corpse," cried the boy, starting from the scene to supplement his sentence with an exclamation of horror.

"An' she is a corpus?" said the big hunter. "She caught the bullet thet slid from thet Injun's gun, an' she'll never tie you to any more trees, Philip!"

The personification of the occupant of the unguided canoe aroused the youth, and a moment later he would have been at the water's edge, if the hand of Doc Bell had not arrested his progress.

"Didn't I say I would correct you?" cried the hunter sternly. "Now jest you let that gal alone; let her drift to thet Ohio if she wants to, fur she's dead, an' you couldn't do her er bit o' good. Keep yer nose out o' danger, an' stick by me."

"She may not be dead, uncle," said the somewhat rash avenger, in a pleading tone, and he glanced at the canoe with the white arm hanging listlessly over the side. "She may be bleeding her life away in that boat, and—and, Doc, I love her. I confess it, now. I freely admit it."

A dark frown settled over the hunter's face, and he hissed forth with flashing eyes:

"So you love the mink that sought yer life, eh? I didn't think that ov Sarah's boy; I didn't dream that I war the uncle ov a darned fool, 'pon my soul I didn't, boy. Ther gal is dead, I say, an' I'm glad ov it. Ef ther warn't Irjuns' foot I'd whoop an' holler over it. Now, stay hyar, an' let her drift to ther devil ef ther Miami will only take 'er thar."

"She has been misled," answered the youth. "I didn't tell her father—her red father, I mean; and, Doc, she sha'n't drift on that way when she may be alive. Drop n y arm!"

The command was followed by a quick jerk, which tore the boy's arm from the hunter's grip, and a second later, he sprung down the bank and dashed into the water.

"Cuss 'im!" grated the bewildered hunter, who did not recover his equilibrium until he saw his nephew swimming out toward the middle of the stream, to intercept the drifting boat. "It riles me to see 'im carry on thet a-way; but when he finds her dead then he'll listen to reason, p'raps."

A few motions in the almost waveless water brought Phil to the center of the Miami, and a minute afterward his hand clutched the empty oar-lock.

Then he raised his head over the gunwale, and had caught a glimpse of the whitest of faces in the bottom of the boat, when Doc Bell's voice rung from the shore.

"Deck! boy, duck!" and before the youth could comprehend his meaning, the reports of two rifles simultaneously cleft the air.

With a groan, Phil Hunter relinquished the canoe, rose to his feet, and sunk back into the water, while a short distance up-stream a canoe was careening beneath the death-throes of a giant Indian.

"Curse the red hound!" blurted Doc Bell, as he threw down his rifle, immediately after the reports, and leaped into the water. "He shot a second afore I did, but I finished 'im, anyhow. Whar's Philip? Ef he's dead—Thar's the boy! but 'e don't know nuthin'."

The stream at the tragic point was fordable, and rushing through the water, he seized the floating form and bore it to the shore.

Then with a tear-drop on his bronzed cheek, he stooped over the lad, and his hand had touched the pulse, when a quick step struck his ear, and, as he sprung to his feet with an ejaculation of surprise, a rifle descended upon his head.

A genuine Indian whoop accompanied the blow, and when Doc Dell recovered, he found himself a captive in the midst of a dozen fierce and hideously-painted Indians!

Simultaneously with his own recovery, the boy exhibited signs of returning consciousness; the eyes were opening and closing with a meaningless stare, and in a few moments more he arose to a sitting posture.

The leader of the band now commanded his braves to turn their faces toward Upper Piqua.

"Don't make the boy tramp along when he's as weak as a kitten," said the hunter, throwing a look of pity upon the youth, who was being dragged over the ground by a stalwart Indian. "Guv 'im to me, an' let me carry 'im. I'm as strong as two ov ye, an' I guv you my word that I'll not try to 'scape."

A short consultation among the savages resulted in the placing of Philip Hunter in the giant's arms, which were connected with the bodies of several braves by long ropes.

"I guess as how they'll make short work ov us when we git to Piqua," whispered the Ajax, to the boy in his arms. "But we'll try to outwit 'em, yit. If ye had 'a' been in ther moonshine when thet Injun shot, thar 'd be a hole through yer skull, 'stead ov a furrow 'longside o' it. The hounds must 'a' been watchin' us, an' blast the luck! they didn't watch fur nothin', eh, Philip?"

"No, no, Doc," groaned the youth, through pain, not fear. "I was rash—forgive me! But I do love that girl, Starlight and thank Heaven, she still lives!"

"Still lives!" echoed the big avenger. "Pshaw, boy, you're mad!"

"No, Doc; when I looked over the boat she was gasping!"

"But she's dead by this time," returned the hunter, "an' mebbe we'll be corpuses afore another noon."

At that moment a savage sprung before them with uplifted tomahawk, and fiercely told the devoted couple that further conversation would bury the hatchet in their brains.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RENEGADE'S LAST PRIZE.

WILDE WALRAVEN, borne down to the very earth by the weight of the panther, was not helpless. Naturally a man of great fierceness, when aroused, he seemed to meet his danger with courage undaunted, and at once determined upon his true mode of defense.

The descent of the beast had been so impetuous that both were carried to the very verge of the river-bank, and over this Walraven resolved to force his brute foe, for once in the water below, he would have the brute more in his power, as the panther greatly dreads water and usually avoids it.

With a quick motion, therefore, and using all his great strength, the Briton forced his burden over the brink, and together they rolled down into the rushing river. Frightened and astonished, the panther released its grasp upon his shoulder, and would have sprung to the land again, but Wilde was too quick for the movement. With fearful energy he drove his knife deep into the animal's back, and with a long shriek of pain the creature, bounding half out of the water, fell backward dead, the swift current taking the body away in a moment.

"Jehu! how weak I am!" exclaimed the soldier, as, making his way up to the bank, he sat down at the water's edge. "I can't walk back to Piqua, that's certain, and I don't like to sit here in full view of the enemy. If I had only— What, have I but to wish?"

He started to his feet at the abruptness of his interrogative, and hurried down-stream, with his eyes fixed upon a tree-top which had fallen from the cliffs above, and lay at the edge of the water. A few steps brought him to the spot, and the leaden-looking object which had arrested his wandering gaze proved to be an Indian's canoe.

Eagerly, and at the expense of his strength, greatly weakened by loss of blood, the white chief drew the boat from its

hiding place, and after considerable effort clambered over the side.

"I'll drop down-stream a piece," he murmured, "and when I reach the low banks I can signal the scouts. Then I will be on the trail to the village, and I can not miss the braves."

Weak from loss of blood and overcome by his tremendous exertions, Wilde dropped at full length in the canoe, when once it was headed down-stream, and quite unconsciously passed into a condition of semi-consciousness, from which he was at length aroused by a sudden shock. His canoe had collided with something.

Rising to a sitting posture he found his canoe alongside of another, and gazing into it he beheld something that made him start.

Before him lay the girl for whom he had risked so much—Starlight! Her eyes were closed, and the hue of death rested upon the almost transparent lids. The long hair was dabbled with blood, and a mass of clotted gore just below the right shoulder proclaimed the path of the bullet. No weapons, save a knife, were to be seen, and its position told that it had been used to dress the wound. But the strips of her garments which the girl—Starlight—had cut for the purpose of dressing the bullet's work, had availed nothing, for they lay at her feet, bloodless and unused.

"If I only had the hound here who did this!" hissed Wilde Walraven, as he gazed upon the deathlike figure below his own bloodless face. "By Heaven! I'd cut his heart out, and cram it down his throat. Starlight, was it for the horror of this dark moment that I left honor, country, and friends? Have I followed thee for months, at length to gaze upon thy corpse, with the blood flowing from my own body? The fates are against me; and I feel myself the most wretched of men. But," and something like a triumphant smile played with his white lips, "he will not get thee! No, no, Starlight, I thank fickle Heaven that you will never be the wife of that mad dog!—that he will never kiss you again!"

Tenderly lifting the limp form into his own canoe, he seemed empowered with new strength, and taking the paddle he pressed on down-stream.

In the moment in which he had lifted the lifeless form he

felt a little fluttering heart-beat, and knew that the maiden was not yet dead.

"I'll save her yet," he cried, "but we must get out of this, or the red-skins may catch me yet."

So down the stream he paddled for a full half hour, and then was stopped. In the bend of the stream his canoe almost ran upon another canoe filled with Shawnees, and, almost ere he was aware of it, the Briton was a prisoner in their clutches!

Why was he bearing away the red girl?

Why was she wounded, and he so bloody?

His demeanor was such as to arouse their suspicions, and they decided, notwithstanding his angry protests, to bear him to the village.

The scene advances.

The troupe of savages, bearing as prisoners the Red coat captain and the beautiful Starlight, enter Piqua.

Starlight, restored to life, from her deep swoon, has been carefully tended by the savages, who now have her there at last to suffer for her crimes against them.

And the Red-coat, too, is theirs, to answer to them with his life.

No wonder then the two white captives, immured in the strong lodge in the center of the village—the giant Doc Bell and the Boy Slayer, placed there to await their doom at the stake—are aroused by the clamor.

Startled by the noise, Doc Bell rushed to the door, above which was a crevice out of which he could overlook the square, in front.

For a moment he gazed in silence, when he suddenly turned upon the youth.

"This must be calling day among our people, fur, by Jove! that cussid gal's took it inter her head to come to life, an' visit her red friends."

"The girl! what girl?" cried Philip Hunter, darting to his relative's side.

"I'd show ye what gal!" responded the hunter, and lifting the youth from the ground he returned to the door.

"Now jes' look inter the middle ov that crowd out thar,"

said Bell, holding the boy up to the crevice. "Yes, jest look yonder, an' say ef a new visitor hezn't cum to Piqua."

The youth's eye soon found the spot designated by his companion. A continual chorus of fiendish yells drew his attention to the great crowd, that surged to and fro in the square, like the angry waves of a storm-ruled ocean.

In the center of the square a knoll rose above the common level, and its summit was crowned with several figures. Two of them were at once recognized by the young slayer, and he could not repress the cry of astonishment that escaped his lips.

Beside the single savage on the top of the rise stood Starlight, her white hands bound at her side, her face pale as ashes, and the golden hair, thickly dotted with crimson spots, covering her bosom. But, the wandering eye shot defiance upon the multitude that yelled and swayed at her feet, and once or twice she threw a triumphant glance at the scarlet-coated man who stood at her left.

Wille Walraven's hands were free; but a rope tied to his arm was also wrapped around the wrist of the Indian on the knoll.

"What are they doing now, Doc?" questioned Philip Hunter, looking up at the hunter, who was gazing upon the scene in the square.

"Doin'?" echoed the giant, without leaving his post. "Why, they're preparin' fur a big time. They're plantin' another post, an' that post's fur ther gal."

"My God! uncle Doc, they're not going to burn Starlight!" cried the youth, a pallor of fear flitting across his face.

"They ain't goin' to do nuthin' else," was the reply, "an' thar the post is planted, an' byar comes a dozen arter us."

Then the old hunter left the door and took the boy's hands.

"Hev ye given all up?" he asked, leering strangely into Philip's face.

"No!" he cried. "I never give up till the last moment, and that *may* be years hence."

"It looks uncommon bilious now," said the giant, with a dubious shake of the head. "Ef I had Nehonesta in ther village I'd think ourselves all right; but I lost that good In-

jun two years ago, an' I've been gittin' inter trouble ever since. But, Phil— Hyar they are; now keep er stiff upper lip, an' ef ye hev to die, die like giants—die game!"

The next minute the door of the hut flew open, and half a score of Indians confronted the captives, who were commanded to come forth.

"We're comin'," said the harsh voice of the old hunter, and grasping the lad's wrist, he stepped forward.

The savages seized them with shouts of triumph, and their arms were quickly pinioned to their sides.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TABLEAU AT THE STAKE.

"THE white avengers are near the black river," cried a chief, who made himself conspicuous by spitting into the faces of the doomed.

"Wal, who disputes it, thet's what I'd like to know?" tartly rejoined the hunter, returning the Shawnee's insult in like coin. "You can't git me to argy a case when it's a one-sided affair; but ef ye give us half a chance we won't tech ther black river, so soon as ye think far, we won't."

"The pale-faces shall not strike the Shawnees again: they leave struck them enough," was the reply. "They shall run no gantlet, but shall be tied to the stake, shot full of arrows, and then burned."

"Thet's jest what I thought they war gain' to do, when we'd 'em overhaulin' ther bows," said the hunter, in a low tone, turning to his young companion. "Sam ov these red-heads kin nip a chap's eye-winkers with their arrers, at an uncommon distance. And— Wal, ef thet cussid hag Sabatha an' her two boys ain't byar, eat me fur a coon!"

"Well, what about the woman and her children, Doc?" asked Philip, throwing a strange look into the Hunter's face.

"Enough about her, boy. She is ther widder ov Puckeshinaw, whose head my bullet split at Point Pleasant in

'seventy-four. Her two chaps ar' kings ov a portion ov ther Shawnee nation on Mad river, an' the hag has taught them to hate us whites, by drinkin' our blood. Ev'ry Injun worships ther little devils—Tecumseh and Laulewasikaw—an ef they become men, snakes! what innocent blood will flow! Jest look at the little tigers, boy; ain't they rigged out? an' wouldn't ye like to spoil ther faces?"

Phil Hunter clenched his hands, and looked wistfully at the two future demons of the north-west.

Further conversation ceased between the twain, till they stood beside the fatal stakes. To one Starlight was already bound, and when her eyes encountered the young avenger's gaze, a cry welled from her throat.

The youth would fain have spoken to the doomed girl; he would have assured her of his undying love, and that he was innocent of the death of Attawattamie, who still lay unburied in the council-house. But he could not reach her in a low tone.

Everywhere bows and arrows were to be seen; they had given place to the tomahawk and scalping-knife.

The Indians crowded forward, and stuck the captives with the barbed shafts, while they were being bound to the stakes. The youths and women were especially forward in this torture, and the red gore streamed down the prisoners' bodies, and formed tiny red pools at the foot of the stakes.

Doc Bell kept his eyes fastened upon the wilow's children—the two little kings who were gaudily adorned with feathers and wampum and war-paint. They were the foremost of the torturers, and he watched them as the hawk watches the chicken that is prone to wander from the maternal wing.

"Cum er little nearder," murmured the old hunter, and he smiled curiously upon the boyish Tecumseh—the red fiend of after years. "Jest poke yer durned arrer inter my leg ergin, an' I'll show ye a trick ye never heard ov afore."

The boy king laughed and shouted at the captive's smile, and, followed by a score of youths, rushed forward again. The guards were binding the captives' hands behind the stakes, and paid no attention to the little demons.

Tecumseh did not know that he was torturing the slayer

of his warlike father, else, perhaps, he would have shrunk from the stake, and driven an arrow to Doc Bell's heart.

He reached the stake, and, with a childish yell, thrust the point of his arrow into the old hunter's flesh; but suddenly sprung back as he saw a hand flash from the rear of the post, and heard a cry of horror burst from a thousand throats!

But Tecumseh was not quick enough for the giant; the great hand closed on his painted shoulder; and, shrieking for help, he found himself drawn toward the man he had tormented!

A second later the scout wrenched his remaining hand from the cords, and, while the Shawnees gazed upon him, with pale lips and bated breath, they saw him sever the sinews that secured his feet, and step from the stake with the boy king writhing in his arms!

"Now!" he shouted at the numerous and terrified Indians. "Now, if ye want to save the son of Puckeshinwa, talk sense to Doc Bell, far by heaven! ef ye palaver erbout it, I'll cut his little heart out."

The desperate man ceased, and the Indians looked into each other's faces blank with mingled doubt and horror. The white man seemed to have weighed the result of his bold action, before he attempted it. At any rate, he knew the worship that the Indians accorded to the sons of Puckeshinwa; but that worship might be dissipated by the proposition he shouted into their fear-stricken hearts.

He faced the fierce multitude with undaunted mien, and while blood streamed from scores of wounds inflicted upon his half-naked body by the savages, he laughed as he held the boy toward his mother, with the tiny scalping-knife trembling over the heart!

"Now ye've got to do one ov two things!" he cried, while the Indians rapidly recovered their senses; "an' that mighty quick, too. Ye've either got to let me an' ther white chap go free; or see the heart ov yer little king—the great Puckeshinwa's son—hang inter yer eyes. Now, which will ye do? Speak, quick! As I sed afore, if ye palaver 'bout it, I'll kill ther boy ennyhow. We're in er hurry to die or leave this village, an' I'd own we'd rather git out 'ith whole skins."

But speak ! speak, I say ! Segawah, speak fur yer people—quick ! er Tecumseh dies !”

The knife shot upward for the death blow, and the imperiled boy cast an imploring look at his mother, who flung herself at Segawah's feet, and plead with all the eloquence of an Indian mother for the life of her favorite son.

The *tableau* presented never had an equal in the wilds of America.

While the mother of Tecumseh plead for his life, the eyes of Segawah swept the swarthy crowd about him. He was fathoming the Indians' hearts, through the portals of the eye, and he found more than one brave whose look said : “ For the sake of the mother, save the little king's life.”

The rapid canvass of the Shawnees' hearts, was also a thorough one. Segawah was a calculating savage ; he could read human nature better than any red-man living, and he saw that the mother's tears had softened a majority of the fierce hearts that surrounded him.

Still he was loth to let the two avengers depart unmolested. For the first time since his work of destruction, Phantom Phil had fallen into the Shawnees' clutches, and now, if he was liberated, he would resume the midnight visits to the Indian camps, and they might never catch him again. All this Segawah revolved in his mind, as he stood silent above the widow. As for himself, he was willing that the knife should cleave Tecumseh's heart, for the young chief might prove a dangerous rival to his own son, who would soon step upon the war-path. But the looks of the braves and sub-chiefs plead for the boy's life, and at length the chief's lips parted to hiss forth in all the bitterness of unwillingness :

“ The two pale dogs shall go !”

“ You're a gentleman, 'pon my word !” said Doc Bell, with a sarcastic smile. “ I thought ye had sum manhood left, an' t does my heart good to see ye show it, it does. Now, Phil, we're off,” and stepping to our young hero's side he severed the bonds, and saw him step from the almost fatal stake—free !

“ Now move toward the river,” continued Bell. “ I'll bring up the rear with the boy atween me an' these treacherous red-skins. They might take a notion to shoot, an' so long as

I hold ther little king, they won't raise a shootin' apparatus, they won't. Wal," to the Indians, "we're off now; but we're not goin' to give bonds for our good behavior, so ye red fellers must look out. The next time ye catch us, keep the little king out o' sight."

The hunter laughed at the success of his desperate action, and commanded Phil Hunter to start.

The boy cast his eyes upon Starlight, still bound to the lake, but did not move.

"What! ain't ye goin', Phil?" cried the old avenger, gazing upon the youth, amaze'lly. "Ar' ye clingin' to that confounded gal yit?"

"Doc," and the boy's hand touched the arm of the hunter, whose eyes still watched the uneasy Indians, "can you leave that poor girl to the tortures of a horrible death? Remember her skin is as white as ours, not a drop of Indian blood runs through her veins, and—"

"Hezn't she tried to let ev'ry drop ov white blood out o' you'n?" was the grated rejoinder. "Ef she war Minneola, I'd make the savages let 'er go, fur ther red creeter has saved yer life; but thet gal—why thet gal—she's a witch. Let 'er die!"

"No, no, uncle Doc—"

"Don't 'uncle Doc' me!" sternly interrupted the old man. "I think too much ov ye, Phil, to liberate a devil to run a knife inter yer heart. I won't do a thing fur her, there! Don't say another word for the mink; but ef ye want to die right quick, stay hyar, while I move off. These red devils 'ud hev yer scalp afore I got to ther river. I'm goin' now; what ar' ye goin' to do?"

Again the boy threw a love-freighted look at Starlight, and their eyes met.

"Starlight does not want the dog who slew Attawattamie to plead for her life. She would sooner die! If he would save his fine scalp, let him go with the big hunter. Starlight can die without a cry."

"Thar! do you hear that?" cried Doc Bell, with a triumphant smile. "Now you'll go, eh?"

Reluctantly, then, the Boy Slayer moved toward the river, with his face turned to the savages. Doc Bell's giant form

covered his trail, and the Indians gazed upon little Tecumseh still lying across the hunter's arm.

In this way they progressed toward the Miami, and when they touched the bank in full view of the Indians, and still within rifle-shot, they paused.

"Now, little king," said the hunter, putting the frightened boy to the ground, "I guess as how ye kin go. Ef it hadn't a' been fur ye, thar 'd be two chaps full ov arrers over yander. I'll never forgit ye, Tecumseh, an' sam day, when yer a great chief p'raps we'll meet. Now go back to yer mother!"

With this, he pushed the boy from him, and darted to the edge of the somewhat steep bank.

"Look out!" shouted Phil, in startling accents; "the hounds are going to shoot!"

The words had scarcely left the boy's lips, when Tecumseh fell headlong to the earth, and a score of rifles cracked.

"Shot, by grammany!" burst from the giant hunter's lips, and for a moment he described drunken circles on the bank, then pitched forward and struck the ground with a dull thud.

The Boy Slayer, entirely unharmed by the volley, sprung to his uncle's side, inwardly cursing the treachery of the Indians.

"Run fur yer life, Phil," said the hunter, his strong voice unchanged. "Run like greased lightnin', I say. Cass the whelps' lyin' souls! I'll play the deuce when they take me back. But what—ain't ye gone yit?"

"No, uncle Doc—"

"No palaverin' now! Run, I say. Look, ther hounds ar' comin'! Ef ye love me run, an' cum back ergin to-night, fur I won't be dead then. No, by grammany! I'm not goin' to die in that infernal town. I know I ain't. Good-by, Pail! I can't navigate now; that cussed bullet deranged the navigatin' machinery; bat— Run—run! or I'll hate ye like snakes!"

The boy pressed the hunter's hand, and darted to his feet.

The yelling Indians were not far away, and he leaped from the river's bank as a shower of bullets cut the twigs from the

trees thereon. He struck the water at a narrow ford, and a minute later he was flying through the forest beyond the stream, unpursued by his enemies, who were dancing and howling around the wounded Hercules.

"Yer a set ov lyin' sneaks!" began the avenger, looking up at the Indians with a smile of contempt; "an' afore I'd be a Shawnee I'd steal a mangy dog's hide an' hunt bones whar har warn't emy. I wish I had warriors fur my foes! I hate to be tuk by a lot ov squaws!"

These words cut the savages to the quick; they jerked Bell to his feet, and, despite his wounded thigh, dragged him over the ground toward the stakes at a rapid rate.

To the one from which his bravery had lately released him he was lashed again; but this time his hands were bound before the Indian youths were permitted to approach. Even then, they were not allowed to torture the hunter, for the chiefs feared that, despite his bonds, he would free himself with a knife near some heart.

Released, in the middle of this uproar and excitement, from the surveillance of the savages, Wilde quietly took his way to his own wigwam, and scarcely had he disappeared when the long and strangely absent Minneola, pallid with suffering, threw herself into her father's arms. Where had she been and why had she suffered?

For many minutes the chief held his child's panting heart against his, and when he released her, she rushed from him and stood by Starlight's side! The eyes of the girls encountered each other, in one long look, and Minneola threw her arms around the body of the doomed one. That look reconciled their differences, and the red child was the first to speak.

"Starlight," she said, "where is the hated Red coat? He slew Attawattamie when he waited for Starlight by the creek of the springs. Minneola saw him strike the old man, and make the boy demon's circle over his heart. He did it that Starlight would hate the boy, and hunt him down. And he hurled Minneola into the Miami, and then sent his bullet past her head. Oh, where is he, sister?" and from the bound girl she turned to the Indians who had watched her actions with dark frowns.

"Where is the white Shawnee?" she shouted. "He flung Minneola into the Miami, because she saw him kill Attawatamie. Father, where is the dog?"

Her revelation startled the savages, and with a shout of rage Segawah darted toward the Briton's lodge, followed by an hundred indignant braves.

His red hand tore the curtains apart, and he sent forth a howl of bitter disappointment, when he found himself standing in the center of an empty wigwam! The sword and pistols as well as their owner, had disappeared!

For a moment the braves stood paralyzed before the empty nest, and then back to the knoll they flew.

"Untie the captives!" shouted Segawah, pointing to Starlight and the giant. "They shall die after another sleep, and the white Shawnee shall burn with them. The traitor can not escape, nor shall Starlight and the big hunter get away, while it is dark. To the strong lodge with them, and let twenty young warriors stand around it. Minneola, seek your father's lodge, and leave it not till dawn. You can not save your traitress now. Go!"

Tearfully and reluctantly the Indian girl tore herself from her white sister, to whom she whispered two words before she turned her back upon the stake.

Amid great confusion Segawah's commands were obeyed.

Doc Bell and the fair outlaw were released from the stakes, and thrust into the strong prison cabin, while a guard stationed himself before Segawah's lodge.

The chief was determined that his daughter should not aid the enemies of his nation.

He soon threw himself upon the Briton's trail, which led to the river, and there the water obliterated it. But the Indians did not despair, for the hunted man did not possess a boat, and he could not long remain hidden from their keen eyes.

"Wal, I'm not dead yit, an' to-night I'll show ther Injuns thet it is best to kill Doc Bell as soon as they catch 'im. Ther boy 'll come prowlin' back then, an' ef a thousand redskins guard ther shanty, I'll git out. Yes, yes, Phil will not fergit to come back, an'— Zounds, I wish it was night now don't ye, gal?"

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"Yes," whispered Starlight, her little hand stealing into the hunter's horny palm. "Starlight wants to tell the boy that she does not hate him now, and that—"

"And that what, gal?"

"She would tell him that by his side she will cross the Eagle river."

"What! go back to Kentucky with the boy?" said Doc Bell. "Zounds! but that will please 'im, but don't tell 'im all at once, fur it 'ud turn his head topsy-turvy, an' he won't be good fur nuthin'. But don't I wish night 'ud come now, gal! Ah! but wishin' won't bring it, an' we've got to set down hyar an' wait fur it."

"Yes, we'll wait," said Starlight, "for before another morning we'll be free!"

Perhaps!

CHAPTER XV.

THE JAWS OF DEATH.

To save his loved ones was Phil Hunter's allotted work on the night succeeding his escape. Finding that he was not, for some incomprehensible reason, pursued, he hovered around the village, awaiting the coming darkness, when to make his way to the prison-lodge and do what lay in his power to set the prisoners free. Almost every act in the drama, after his escape, he had witnessed from his snug covert. He saw the arrival of Minneola—the escape of Walraven, the pursuit, the stationing of the guards around Sagawa's lodge and around the prison. All this enabled him to lay his plans—which were first to free Minneola, in order to have her aid in penetrating to the prison lodge.

When deep darkness and sleep had settled over all, the Boy Slayer crept like a snake into the village and up to the chief's lodge. A long while he lay very near, crouched behind a log. Upon this log, at length, the guard seated himself, the top of the lodge constantly watched by his sleepless eye. That was the young avenger's coveted moment. Rising noiselessly

behind the Indian, he drew him suddenly backward, and then, with a stroke quick as a flash, drove the red-skin's own knife deep into the upturned breast, and clutching the red throat, stifled the cry just on the dying lips.

This tragedy, so swiftly and silently done, did not arouse a single alarm ; so, seeing his way clear, he at once entered the lodge and aroused the sleeping maiden.

That Minneola was amazed was to be expected, but with low, quick words, Phil told her all—his wishes and purposes—and she, loving him deeply, and glad to release Starlight from her impending doom, willingly assented to make the effort required for the release of the prisoners.

But how was this to be done ?

Minneola pondered over the matter, and seemed to have decided on the course to pursue.

"Minneola will draw all the guards save one from the lodge," she at length announced ; "and while they are away the White Panther must free the pale birds."

"I'll do it, girl ; but how can you remove the guards ?"

"Let the pale boy watch and wait," was the reply. "Now come !"

They crept from the lodge and approached the prison. Bidding the youth to crouch upon the ground and seize the first opportunity for action, she left his side with a silent pressure of the hand.

A few minutes of silence followed her departure, and then the boy heard her voice.

"Segawah has crept back to his lodge, wounded by the White Panther's bullet," she said, apparently addressing the guards, "and he has sent his child to the braves, saying, 'Tell Red Fox and his warriors to come to the white lodge, for Segawah may be near the dark river.' Will the Shawnees obey ? The pale birds can not escape if one Shawnee guards them, and the young Slayer is far down the Miami. Come with Minneola."

"Red Fox will go to Segawah," the eager listener heard a harsh voice say ; "and the great chief shall tell him and his braves where the White Panther is."

"Braves," he added, "we will go to Segawah. Who will guard the pale hawk ?"

Instantly half a score of sentinels proclaimed their willingness to guard the hut, but the chief selected a young brave for the task, and Philip Hunter heard the noise of many feet flying toward the great chief's lodge.

Now was the time for action. In a few moments the braves would discover the character of Minneola's *ruse*, and return on the wings of the wind to the prison.

The youth crept forward, and the single guard sunk to the ground, stricken to the heart.

Then the wampum, sealed with Serawah's totem, was jerked from the door, and a knife severed the multiplicity of sinews that held the portal shut.

The boy then flung the door open, and the next moment stood face to face with the cabin's tenants.

"I know'd ye would come, boy," whispered Doc Bell, with delight; "an' hyar's er gal what furgits the past, an' wants to go to Kaintuck with ye. Phil—"

"Hark!" interrupted the boy. "That yell tells a terrible story. Come—we must fly like the wind-birds. To the river. God help that red girl among the red demons!"

He caught Starlight's hand and darted toward the Miami, closely followed by the old hunter, who had snatched knife, tomahawk and rifle from the slain guard.

They had not reached the suburbs of the village before the air resounded with deafening yells, to which were joined the howls and yelps of two hundred dogs.

"They don't see us, yet," said the youth, almost breathlessly; "but—"

Whiz, whiz—zip, zip!

"Ar' ye hit, Phil?" shouted the old avenger, seeing the boy relinquish Starlight's hand, and reel like a drunken man.

"Hit?—yes, Doc!"

"Cuss the red-skins!" grated the hunter, and a moment afterward he had lifted the boy from the ground, and was bearing him on, despite his own painful wound, with the white girl at his side.

"They didn't see us, gal," he said, between his pantings. "They heard us, and shot at random, but we'll git to the river all safe. 'Thar! they're shootin' ag'in; but they can't hit us now."

Then a moment later he uttered an ejaculation of joy.

"The river, by the hokey! but ef we only hed a canoe."

They stood on the bank a moment, their ears ringing with the demoniacal yells that swiftly approached, and then the hunter stepped into the stream.

"Stop, big brave!" suddenly cried Starlight, clutching the hunter's arm. "A canoe is on the water."

"An' who's in it—Injuns?" exclaimed Doc Bell; but before the girl could reply, the low cry of a whippowill came from the center of the stream, and Starlight answered it with a like noise.

They heard the prow of the canoe sweep round to the bank, and Starlight greeted it with a cry of delight.

"My red sister!"

"Yes, Minneola is here!" came a voice from the canoe, which proved to be a very large one. "Quick! quick! leap in and we will fly like the swallow down the river."

The hunted ones needed no additional incentive to impel them into the boat.

Doc Bell placed the young slayer at Minneola's feet, then lifted Starlight after him, and sprung in himself.

"Now!"

He seized one of the strong paddles, and sent the boat into the middle of the Miami by a single stroke.

At that moment the van of the pursuing band reached the water. They heard the splash of the paddles, and sent a harmless volley of bullets and arrows after the fugitives.

Impelled by the giant hunter's strong arms, as well as by Minneola's pliant wrists, the canoe shot down the river with startling rapidity, and when at last the shouts of the baffled red-skins died away, the two girls simultaneously breathed the sweet word:

"Safe!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LIFE FOR A LIFE.

The light rapidly increased in intensity and splendor, as the voyagers proceeded, and as Doc Bell plied the paddle, the Indian girl related how she had outwitted the guards.

Beyond the door of her lodge, she caused them to wait until she could inquire into the alleged condition of her father, and entered the dark wigwam. With a keen knife she ripped the rear skins of the structure, and departed with swift steps toward the river. She knew the hiding-place of one of her father's many barges, and as she stepped into it, she heard the yells of pursuit, and rowed the boat up the stream to succor the flying whites.

How successful her efforts were, the reader has already seen, and she smiled when she looked upon the youth's face, and saw his eye light up with gratitude. But he held Starlight's hand in his, and with his head on her bosom, he seemed oblivious of danger as they swept toward the Ohio.

He knew that Minneola would follow him to the Kentucky forts, and then he feared for Starlight's life, when he should be compelled to tell the red girl that he could not call *her* wife. She might become a demoness then; her love might dissolve in bitter hate, and blood might flow beneath her avenging knife.

Paul Hunter thought of this as he looked into Minneola's eyes, and he was about to fathom the girl's heart—about to prepare her for the future—when the old hunter's voice startled every soul.

"Look out, boy! yonder! my God! he's goin' to shoot!"

The hunter's eyes and outstretched hand riveted the gaze of all upon the high bank to their right; but as they caught the outlines of a scarlet-coated figure on the cliff, a puff of smoke burst from a pistol, and a death shriek welled from the boat.

Minneola fell forward, and Philip Hunter raised her head with a cry of horror!

The red lips were covered with blood, and the eyes glassy with approaching death!

"He meant that ball for you, gal," said the old hunter, addressing Starlight; "but jest as he pulled the trigger, she threw her head for'ard an' saved yer heart!"

"Yes, curse you, white mink! I'll have your heart's blood yet," came from the bank above, and again Wilde Walraven appeared with ready pistol.

He covered the form of Starlight, which Phil shielded with his body, and while he held his weapon forward, a report sounded in the forest, in his rear, and with an unearthly cry he reeled from the precipice and fell into the water!

His bath told the excited spectators that the ball from the rear had but stunned the hunted captain, and springing from the water, he sought escape down the bushy bank.

But, Doc Bell's rifle now covered the scarlet back, and as he was about to touch the trigger, Starlight jerked the weapon from his hands.

"He slew Starlight's red father!" she cried, "and Starlight swore by the Great Spirit to slay the hound whose claws should spill Attawattamie's blood!"

She flung the weapon to her shoulder, and a quick aim and a sharp report caused the renegade to leap into the water with a sharp cry. The bullet nestles deep in his brain!

The Shawnees reached the cliff in time to see the fugitives disappear round a sharp bend in the stream, and they wreaked their vengeance upon the dead Briton.

"Is ther gal dead?" asked Doc Bell, glancing at Minneola, who lay motionless in the boat, her head reclining in Starlight's lap.

"No; but she speaks no more!" said the white girl, looking up with moistened eyes. "She is nearing the dark trail, and—"

Minneola opened her eyes with a gasp, and fastened them on the young avenger.

"Good-by, White Panther," she said, in a low voice. "Minneola will never build the fires in your wigwam; but across the black river, in the land of the Manitou, she will live for you. Kiss Minneola's hand, pale boy; kiss it quick, for her feet are in the water."

Philip Hunter raised the girl's hand to his lips, while Starlight bent her head, and glued her pale lips to the icy face; and thus, embraced by the ones for whose love she had periled so much, the Shawnee child stepped beyond the boundaries of time!

Tears fell thick and fast upon the face of the devoted girl, and even stern Doc Bell turned his face away and brushed a pearly drop from his cheek!

Then he covered Minneola's face with his buck skin hunting frock, and, silent and motionless, she rode to the silvery surface of the Ohio.

No further incidents occurred to mar the welfare of the voyagers, and at last the canoe pushed out into the great stream, that separated the Shawnee's land from the "dark and bloody ground."

They hailed the mighty river with shouts of delight, and a week later the gates of Boonesborough opened to receive them. Within the walls of the fort, Segawah's daughter found a grave, and over the mound, Philip Hunter and Starlight exchanged vows of eternal constancy.

Reader, our story draws to a close.

How the Briton managed to escape the keen eyes of the Shawnees, may never be explained, but that he did escape to fall by the hand of the girl whose benefactor he had basely murdered, to carry out certain mercenary designs of his own, is well known to all.

Little Fox-Fire, the dandy, was not content to give Starlight up tamely. He penetrated the forests of Kentucky, and in an attempt to enter Boonesborough one night, he fell beneath the knife of a settler.

Segawah mourned his daughter for many years, and after the war of 1812, an old Indian, bent double, almost, with age, came to the Kentucky settlement, and asked to be permitted to die on the grave of his child. They admitted him to the spot, and upon the mound he fell with a cry of joy, and died almost instantly.

Doc Bell, the giant, lived to a green old age, and while the second war between our land and England raged in Ohio he was heard to regret that he had spared the life of Tecumseh, whose tomahawk was then desolating our frontiers.

"Ef somebody had 'a' told me what that little chap war goin' to do when he got to be a man, I'd 'a' split his heart thet time anyhow, an' took ther consequences."

After the close of our romance, Phantom Phil was seen no more in the forests of Ohio. He had satiated his desire for blood, and with his golden-haired wife—truly the soft Starlight of his existence—he passed years of unalloyed happiness in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. As for the red league who swore to hunt him down, but four remained, and they fell beneath his rifle in the vicinity of Boonesborough, whither they had followed the White Panther, for the purpose of fulfilling their fearful vow.

And often, when peace dwelt throughout the length and breadth of America, Philip Hunter would gaze into Starlight's radiant eyes, and deem her a prize well worth the winning.

THE END.

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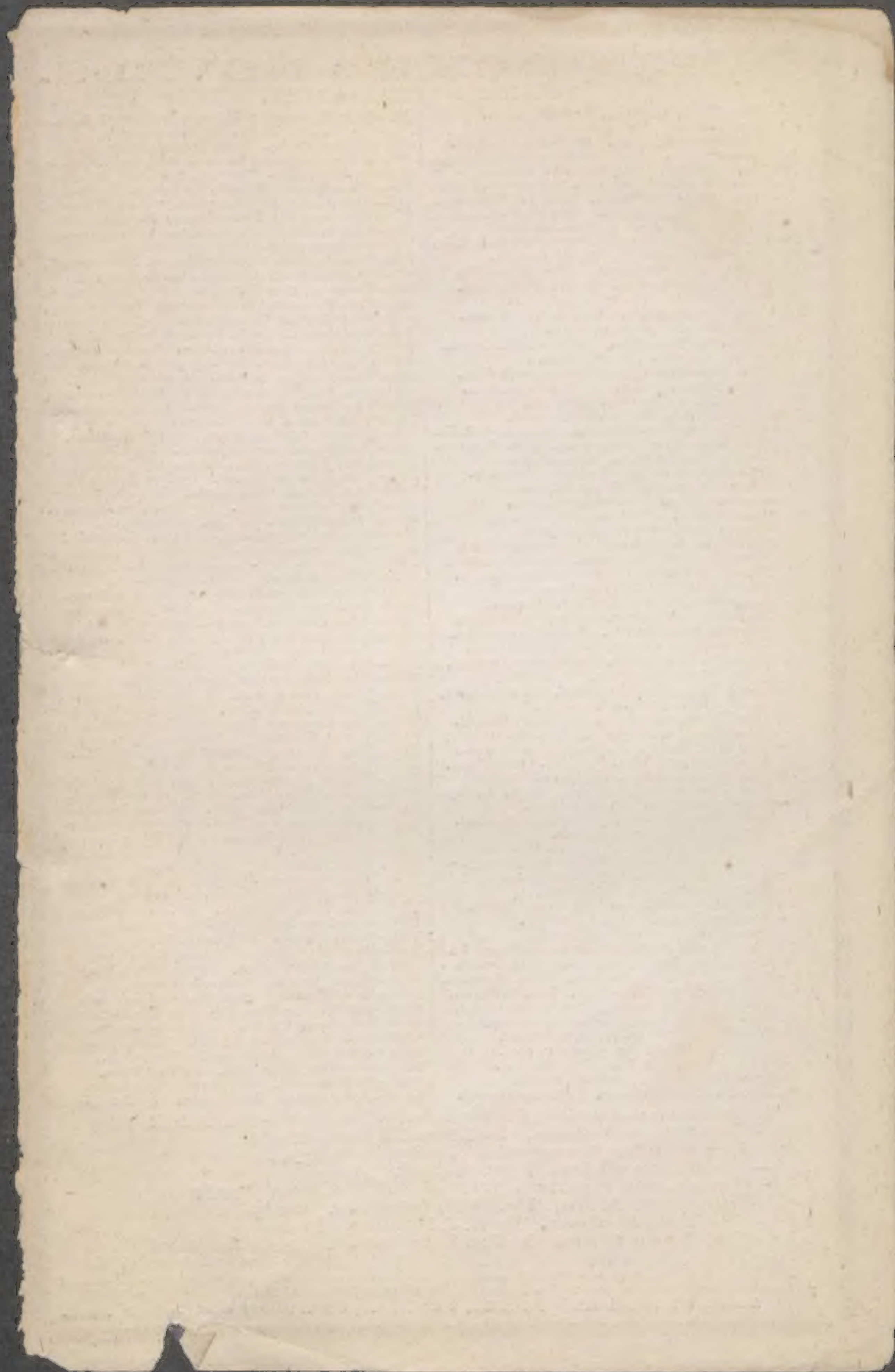
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